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VALERIUS.



W. J. BALLANTYNE

VALERIUS;

A

ROMAN STORY.

They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know what's done i' the Capitol !

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

[by
John Gibson Lockhart.]

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VALERIUS.

AUTHORITY

VALERIUS.

CHAPTER I.

I SAW, my friends, that you listened with not less of indignation, than of astonishment, to the account which I yesterday gave you of a day spent in the Amphitheatre of Vespasian. Neither did I expect that it should be otherwise with young persons of ingenuous minds, whose feelings have never been hardened by any personal experience of the life of Rome.

And yet when you reflect a little more upon the matter, I think you will abate something of the wonder you manifested

on hearing of the fondness of the Roman people, for some of those cruel, ruthless spectacles. You will admit, at least, that there is a certain natural principle, on an exaggerated and morbid obedience to which, rather than on any total and absolute departure from the laws of our mind, much of that which excited so much of your astonishment and indignation also, may be supposed to depend. In and by itself, I maintain it must always be a most interesting thing for a man to witness, in whatever shape, the last moments of any human creature. Do not mistake me;—I mean not those merely corporeal struggles, in which there must always be every thing to revolt, and nothing to interest, because in them, it is evident, the nobler part of our nature can have no share—the soul being already swallowed up, and its divinity absorbed in the intense convulsions of animal suffering. These are things on which no eyes can gaze willingly, without indicating

the degradation of the spirit at whose bidding they are moved. But before that curtain falls, beyond which every one must shudder to penetrate, there is a last terrible act of the real tragedy, which must ever have power to fix the eyes with an earnestness not the less deep, because of its being preceded by some struggles of reluctance. We live in a state in which, however we may clothe ourselves with the armour of levity, or with the more effectual armour of occupation, it is impossible that the one fearful idea of dissolution should not ever and anon come to scare us with its terrors. We feel that we are walking over a soil, on the most level and the most rugged parts of which it is equally possible we may meet with the dark pit wherein it is our destiny to stumble. How sudden, or how gradual soever the inevitable fall may be, we well know we shall have little enough space to prepare ourselves for the last leap, when we shall be fairly on the de-

clivity ; and I maintain, once more, that it is a rational, no less than a natural, curiosity, which leads us to seek to supply, in some measure, this necessary defect, and to gather, if possible, from witnessing the last moments of others, some hints which may be of use to us, when our own dark hour shall come. We see a being standing on the edge of a precipice, to which the only thing we know certainly, is, that we ourselves shall one day be brought ; and shall it be possible to feel no curiosity concerning the manner in which he conducts himself on that giddy brink ? That which is denied to us in our own person, may, in part, be supplied in his ; and the eyes which dwell upon his features, while they are filled with the overwhelming expectation of near approaching death, make the closest approximation of which our nature admits to penetrating the actual mysteries of the unseen region. For myself, I shall confess without scruple, that both wiser and

better did I come away from all that mournful spectacle. But perhaps I am joining together things which, after all, had no necessary connection, when I ascribe to my contemplation of the death of Thraso, and the other cruel sights which, as it seemed, were regarded with indifference and heartlessness by the great multitudes around me, so much of the salutary change which, about this period, my own spirit underwent; a change of which you have already oftentimes heard me speak, and of which shortly you shall hear me speak more at length.

The slumbers which followed that busy day of novelties and terrors, were long and heavy; for utterly worn out were both mind and body, and youth hastened to repair the waste of its energies, by drinking deeply at the great fountain of natural refreshment. Nevertheless, although the hand of sleep had lain steadily upon me, when I awoke in the already-confirmed light of morning,

I found myself yet filled with a confused and tremulous sense of excitation, as if the spirit had disdained to be idle after having received so much food for activity, and Fancy had still been garnishing the passive sphere of the night with aerial representations of all the gorgeous and solemn realities of the by-past day. I lay there ruminating amidst the dispersing shadows of the mysterious world of dreams, and scarcely as yet aware that a whole night had passed since I had returned from the Amphitheatre, when I was at length roused to a sudden and complete recollection of all things by the entrance of Boto.

“My dear master,” said he, making a sort of start after he had come in, “I was afraid you would be angry with me for not coming to you sooner, but now I perceive you have been as lazy as the rest of us. Why, surely, you are not aware what time of day it is! What would my dear old lady over the water say, if she heard of

my young master lying in bed till within three hours of noon ! Oh, what a place is this you have brought me to ? Why, when I awake in the morning, the first thought that comes into my head always is, What, Boto, and is it really possible that all that wide roaring sea lies between you and the green banks of quiet Anton ? Is it truth, good truth, and neither dream nor witching, that you, *Boto*, are in *Rome* ? But I sometimes have to jump up, and take a look out of the window before I am quite convinced ; and then, to be sure, I know well enough that I, who used always to dream about driving cattle to Venta, and perhaps kissing a Brigian lass by the way, could never dream of so many fine things unless I were really among them. Good heavens ! what a heap of stories I shall have to tell, when we get safe back to Old Britain !”

“ Indeed, Boto,” said I, “ you will be quite a travelled man. Be sure you do not give yourself too many airs on the occasion.”

“Travelled man, in faith,” replied the clown. “I should like to know, who it is that will be able to hold up his head with me, when I am once fairly back again? Oh, how the old smith will be humbled! He thought himself such a mighty person, because my old master, your father, had taken him with him as far as Camulodunum,* and how he used to brag of what he had seen there; but now, I trow, Master Per-norix will be fain to talk quietly about his journies.—Oh, Rome, Rome! what fine things shall I have to tell them all about Rome,—and the lions, and the monkies, and the elephants, and the fighting men, and the Christian, and the Emperor, and all the wonderful sights we saw yesterday. But the worst of it is, that nobody will ever be able to believe one half of what I shall tell them.—And when does my dear Master Valerius think we shall be returning to my

* Either Colchester or Malden.

old lady, and all the rest of them in Britain?"

"Of a truth, good Boto," said I, "that is more than I can pretend to give you any notion of; but I dare say, you shall have both time and opportunity to pick up a few more marvels still before we go. In the mean time, you are comfortable, I hope, in your quarters, and Dromo takes good heed of you."

"Dromo," quoth he, looking as arch as his massive features would admit of,—
 "Dromo, indeed!—If I had nobody to trust to but him, I should be very ill off. Dromo is a great man; the young lord of the house has him up in his chamber every day to talk with him by himself; and when he comes down again, or returns from any of the errands he is sent out upon, there is no bearing with him in the court-yard, where we are all huddled together. As for the overseer, old Sarcalus, the freed-man, he has quite given him up. Nobody dare speak about whipping him; he looks upon

himself as almost as important a person as his master, I believe, if the truth were known ; and yet I should not complain, for, after all, it was Dromo that carried me yesterday to the Amphitheatre."

" Ay, that was very kind of Dromo—I should have thought of it myself.—And did he not see that you got your supper snugly, when you came back ?"

" Ah ! now, master, don't make them whip me—I see they have told you all."

" All !" said I,—“ I do assure you they have told me nothing about you ; but come speak out. It must be something very bad that would make me think of having you whipt. You have been only three days in Rome—I shall make allowance for a few vagaries, provided they be not very extravagant."

" Well, then, Master Valerius," quoth he ; “ since they have told you nothing beforehand, and you seem inclined to be so good-natured with me, I shall e'en tell you

all myself, and I hope you won't think me, after all, very much to blame."

"Speak out, my honest Boto, and remember there is Dromo also to be examined, in case you keep any thing back from me."

"Ah! master, but Dromo would not be so easily caught as poor Boto. Dromo is a cunning man, and a close; and besides, they say he was born in a city they call Crete, and the people of that place can't speak a word of truth, even although they were willing. Do not think any thing at all about Dromo; but trust entirely to your own poor Boto, and he will tell you every thing. Dromo is a sad dog."

I know not what more he might have proceeded to say concerning Dromo, had not that crafty Cretan, who, without question, had been listening all the while behind the door, just at that moment glided in on very delicate tiptoe, and coming close up behind the British slave, as he stood in the act of haranguing me, smote him a smart fillip

upon the cheek with the back of his fingers, mimicking, at the same time, the broad British accent of the man, and repeating after him into his tinkling ears, the words, *Dromo is a sad dog—Dromo is a cunning man, and a close—Dromo would not be so easily caught as poor Boto.*—"Ha, ha! Master Valerius," then said he to me, "and so you would really take the trouble to ask questions of this worthy man, when you had it in your power to send for me—I thought it had not been for nothing that three persons I could name entered upon a certain alliance—but 'tis all one to the Cretan.—Both Sextus, and you, may manage your own affairs for yourselves, if such be your pleasure."

I knew not on this whether to be more amazed with the impudence of the Cretan, or the confusion of poor Boto, who stood rubbing his cheek with a strangely mingled aspect of sheepishness and sulkiness; but Dromo soon put an end to the affair, by turning round with a face of admirably

feigned astonishment to my Briton, and saying, " Good heavens ! Boto, are you still there ? Do you not perceive that your master and I have something to say to each other in private ? Begone, my good man—shall I never be able to render you susceptible of the smallest polish ?"

These last words being accompanied with a gentle push on the back, soon expelled poor Boto, who, nevertheless, did not depart without casting towards me a look of woeful appeal over his shoulder. But I perceiving plainly, in the midst of all his frolicsome behaviour, that Dromo had really something to say to me ; and suspecting, of course, that the interest of Sextus might be concerned in what he had to say, suffered my slave to withdraw in good earnest. Dromo, after the door was shut, laid his finger upon his lip, and stood still for a moment in an attitude of close attention ; but the heavy heels of the reluctant Briton were heard with great distinctness,

lumbering along the marble floor of the gallery ; so, being satisfied that there was no eaves-dropping in the case, the varlet seated himself forthwith in a posture of great familiarity on the nether end of my couch, and, to judge from the expression of his countenance, seemed evidently to be preparing himself for a disclosure of some importance. At length, after not a few winks of much intelligence, it was thus he began :—

“ You may hear Boto’s story, sir, at any time you please, and I dare say it will amuse you ; but, in the meantime, I must really have you attend to me, for, without jesting, things are by no means in so fair a train as I had thought for my young master ; and if something effectual be not speedily discovered, I am really at a loss to think how we shall be able to get out of our difficulties, in such a manner as may be either satisfactory to him, or creditable to my management. But you had better

get up and dress yourself, and while you are doing so, I will tell you every thing."

I did as he bade me, and then the Cre-tan proceeded :—"As I was coming out of the Amphitheatre yesterday, I happened to find myself rubbing shoulders with a certain old fat Calabrian, whom I had seen before about Rubellia's house in the Suburra, and thinking that no harm could possibly come of being civil to him, I began immediately to ask his opinion of the spectacles. Whereon I wish you had been there to see how much he was delighted with the attention I paid him, and how he plumed himself on being admitted to talk on such subjects with such a person as me; for the man himself is but an ignorant fellow, and seems never to have kept company but with the grooms and hinds. From less to more, we began to be the greatest friends in the world; and by the time we got to the Arch, it was evident that we could not possibly part, without having a glass together to cement the ac-

quaintance. Well, we were just about to dive into one of the wine-cellars there, below the gate-way, when I saw your friend Boto standing by himself in the middle of the street, apparently quite a-gaze and bewildered, and not able to form the smallest guess which way he ought to take in order to reach home ; and being a good-natured fellow, in spite of all that has been said, I immediately shouted out his name till he was compelled to hear me, and then beckoned to him to come along with us, which indeed he did without much coaxing."

" Well, Dromo," said I, " and so all your great news is, that you have been leading my Briton into one of your debauches ? In truth, I think you need not have made such an affectation of mystery withal."

" Stop now," quoth he, cutting me short ; " if the slave be too slow, I am sure the master's quickness will make up for it.—Hear me out before you begin commenting ; such interruptions would bring the Stagyrite himself to a stand ;—we were

soon, all three of us, seated in one of those snug little places, which if you have not yet seen, you are ignorant of the most comfortable sight within all the four walls of Rome,—a quiet cleanly little place, just big enough for the company,—three good hassocks upon the floor, a handful of sausages, and a plate of dried fish as broad as the shield of Ajax, and a good old fashioned round-bellied jolly jug of Surrentine in the midst of us. I dare say, there were a hundred besides employed in the same way in the house ; but we shut the door, and were as private as behind the altar of Vesta.”

“ A tempting scene, Dromo ; and what use did you make of your privacy ? ”

“ All in good time,—all in good time, Master Valerius ; you would have the apple before the egg, if one would indulge you, I think. We had scarcely emptied our first jug, ere the conversation between the Calabrian and me took a turn that was not quite unnatural ; for slaves, however little

you may trust them, will always be smelling out something of the truth ; and you may be sure, all this visiting, and feasting, and riding about in chariots, and sitting together at the Amphitheatre, has not been going on, without causing a good deal of talk both in this house and the Lady Rubellia's. The courtship was of course the subject of our conversation, and I, pretending to know nothing of it myself, except from the common report of the slaves about our house, affected to consider it as highly probable, that the fat Calabrian might have had much better opportunities than mine of being informed how the affair really stood."

" And did he really seem to have any knowledge about it ?" said I.

" Not much—not much ; but still the man did tell me something that I think may turn out to be well worth the knowing. I am sure, said I, (by this time Boto was fast asleep,)—I am sure, if Rubellia won't have my young master, it won't be for want of presents ; for we all know he has already

given her a whole casket of rings and bracelets that belonged to his mother, and he is sitting for his picture, which, they say, he is to give her besides. So much said I.

‘And *I* am sure,’ quoth the Calabrian in return, ‘that if your young master don’t have my lady, it won’t be for want of presents neither; for she is the most generous open-handed lady in the world, and that her worst enemies will allow, although her father be an old rogue, and an usurer, as all the town says he is. No, Dromo,’ continued he, ‘nor will it be for want of philtres, nor of charms, nor of any thing that soothsaying can procure; for, between ourselves, my lady keeps up a constant traffic of late with all that sort of gentry; and what the issue of it all may be, Hecate only knows.’ Now, my dear Master Valerius, when I heard him speak of philtres and charms, you may be sure I began to quicken up my ears more keenly than ever.”

“Poh! poh! Dromo,” said I; “you are not serious. You do not mean surely to

make me think that you believe in the efficacy of love-potions, or any such quackeries as these ?”

“Quackeries!” do you call philtres quackeries? Why, there was a girl once gave myself a philtre that kept me raving for six months.”

“What sort of a looking girl was she, good Dromo?”

“Bah!” quoth he; “that’s all utter nonsense. I see well enough what you are thinking of; but, do’nt expect to drive me out of memory as well as judgment, by any of your jeering. Heavens and earth! when did any body ever hear of any body denying the efficacy of philtres? What an atheistical sort of barbarians those Britons must be that you have been living amongst! By Jupiter, if you had suffered as much from philtres as I have done, you would be a little more shy of talking so contemptuously about them. I wonder you are not afraid of some evil coming upon you. Remember Dian’s handful; remember the fate of Actæon!”

“Good Dromo,” said I, “I suppose you also suffered from peeping. But talk seriously, are you yourself a dealer in philtres, that you are so anxious I should believe in their power? Or what is your meaning?”

“My meaning,” quoth he, with great vehemence of utterance, and smiting his forehead as he spoke,—“my meaning, Master Valerius, is just this, that if Rubellia gives Sextus such another philtre as a certain cunning little damsel gave me, before I left the pleasant Island of Crete, to be a drudge and a packhorse here in Rome, where a man may sweat all his life in another’s service, without being once thanked for his pains, and perhaps be laid out, look ye, for a supper to the vultures at last, because no body will treat his carcase to a blaze of old sticks,—I say, that if the Lady Rubellia contrives to give Sextus such another philtre as that, the game’s up, Master Valerius; and we may as well set about painting the dead, as try to save him from her

clutches. The man's gone—he's as lost as Troy."

"Well, well, Dromo," said I, for I perceived there was no use in fighting it with him, "and have you not been able to hit upon any feasible scheme for averting this horrible philtre?"

"Ay, have you come to that at last? that is just what I have been cudgelling my brains about, half of the time drunk, and half of it sober, for the last twelve hours. But if I do hit upon any thing, I shall need assistance. In such cases, the best judgment can do nothing by itself."

"Fear not, my dear Dromo," quoth I; "if my assistance can do you any good, you well know you can command it to the utmost."

"Then prepare," replied the Cretan, rising up with an air of much solemnity—"then prepare in good earnest; for, may Cerberus growl upon me, if I don't find out some scheme, before another day goes over, and shew you all what stuff I am made of.

Impudent baggage, forsooth, to think of entrapping Sextus without consulting Dromo!—No, by Cretan Jove, she shall not accomplish it—no, not even with a sea of philtres.”

“And, in the mean time,” said I, “what must Sextus do with himself?”

“He must not go near the Suburra; he must remain closely at home; and as for tasting any thing at her house, or any thing that comes from her—by heavens, if he does not take his oath against that—we may as well leave him to his destiny. If he will but take good care for this one day, I think there is every chance something may be hit upon ere the morning. I have got my cue, and shall not be idle, I promise you; but I undertake nothing, unless you swear to keep Sextus safe, and at a distance from her, till night-fall.”

“Good Dromo,” said I, “make yourself easy on that score; it will be a new circumstance indeed, if we find any difficulty in

persuading Sextus to stay a single day away from the Suburra."

"*Persuading!*" quoth the slave; "who ever heard of such a word as *persuasion* at such a crisis as this? I tell you what it is, he *must* be kept away; and if no other plan can be fallen on, I have a great mind to turn the key on him and his pedagogue both together. I heard them hammering at their lessons already as I came along—and that puts me in mind that I have a very shrewd notion there is more between that bearded goat of ours and this Rubellia, than any of us had been suspecting. Unless that Calabrian lies—and I think lying is above his sphere—this old rogue has been oftener in the Suburra of late than we had any thought of. So help me Hermes! I believe Licinius has been employing him to go his private messages to Rubellia—but that is only one insult more, and I shall have my revenge all in a lump."

“ I think it very likely,” answered I, quite quietly, “ that Licinius may have been employing Xerophrastes in some such embassies as these ; and, if I mistake not the matter, he would feel himself quite as much in his element, trotting along the Sacred Way, and so forth, on such errands for the father, as in expounding those musty parchments of his to the son.”

“ No matter for all that,” quoth Dromo, rubbing his hands ; “ the more enemies the more glory. Would Miltiades have been pleased had the Spartans arrived ?—Leave all to me—take you care only of Sextus, and I am not afraid for any reinforcement that rascally rhetorician may bring against me.”

While he was saying so, the face of the Cretan exhibited obvious symptoms of incipient glee ; and he concluded with snapping his fingers, and uttering a short keen whistle, such as you have heard from the lips of a hunter, when the dogs begin

to bay around the thicket in which he suspects the boar has his lair. Seeing him so ecstatically occupied with the expectation of some active and bustling scene, I could not help participating, in some measure, in the feelings of the Cretan myself. In short, I could scarcely look upon his dancing eyes and grinning lips, without being touched for the moment with something of the genuine spirit of your managing go-between; and so, "dear Dromo," said I, "I beseech you, if it be possible, let me have a share in whatever you resolve upon."

"Watch well," replied he, evidently much flattered—"watch well during the day, and you shall see what you shall see, when the moon mounts above the Coelian, and the hour for grubbing among herbs and bones is come.—But now I hear some one coming, and I think it is Licinius' own footsteps."

So saying, Dromo laid his finger once more on his lips, in token of secrecy, and

glided from the room. Nor had his well-practised ears deceived him, for he had scarcely vanished into the gallery, before my kinsman entered at the other side of the apartment.

“My dear Valerius,” said he, saluting me affectionately, “I thought you were probably much fatigued with your spectacles, so I desired that nobody should call you this morning; but I met Boto in the hall just now, and hearing from him that you were astir, I have come up to see you, for I wish particularly to have a little private conversation with you. If you have no objection, we will take a walk in the eastern portico, till such time as Xerophrates leaves Sextus at liberty for the day.”

So saying, Licinius led the way along the gallery to the place he had mentioned, and in passing, we also heard the deep voice of the rhetorician resounding among the pillars, and could even catch a few of the magniloquent phrases with which he was feeding the ears of his pupil. “Ay, ay,”

quoth my kinsman, as we went on, "I wish, indeed, it were possible to inspire the youth with some proper sense of what is due to the dignity of principle, and how absurd it is to think of gratifying idle whims at the expence of the dictates of duty. But I fear the boy is incorrigible; and, alas! Valerius, I am very sorry to say that I suspect you have been looking on his errors with a countenance rather of favour and of confirmation, than, as I should have expected from you beforehand, of rebuke."

"My dear sir," said I, "you know not how much you distress me. I could rather die than encourage Sextus in any thing I thought evil; but, indeed, I have seen nothing to make me imagine him capable of following any such conduct."

"Come, by Hercules," returned he, "there is no occasion for so many words. I thought it very odd that you went away so soon from the Forum the other day, considering that you had never been there before; but I thought it doubly and trebly remark-

able, that Sextus should have accompanied you, knowing, as he must have done, how much I, at all events, was interested in the affairs of Rubellia. But I have since found out that it was not the society of old Capito alone—no, my friend, nor yet the alarm of a thunder-storm that detained you at the villa. In a word, Valerius, I strongly suspect that Sextus is carrying on an intrigue with a young lady whom I never saw, but who, I am quite sure, will never be heiress to fifty sexterces, and that this is the true cause of his reluctance concerning a match, which, to say nothing of the pleasure it would give to me, is the only means by which I can see any prospect of the young man's fortune being made, and the dignity of our family kept up, after another effigy shall have been added to the long series that already adorns our hall. Infatuated and headstrong boy! if he owes nothing to himself or to me, is it possible that he can look upon that venerable line of sages and heroes, without feeling shame

in the degradation of his own earth-stooping desires ?”

“ Without question, sir,” said I, “ you allude to the Lady Rubellia, whom, as I have heard from various quarters, you are desirous of seeing wedded to Sextus.”

“ Yes, Valerius, it is indeed to her I allude ; and it is of the obstacle which—unwittingly, I doubt not, and heedlessly—you yourself have been throwing in the way of that much-desired union, that I have now to make my complaint. Of a surety, such is not the service that I had expected from my British kinsman. Rubellia is descended from a noble family, and, both in possession and expectation, her wealth is great. Two heavy fines laid upon me by Domitian, and the expence at which I have maintained my rank among the great patrons of Rome, these things together have impoverished me, not indeed in a manner unworthy of the lineage from which I am sprung, but to an extent not altogether convenient. In this boy my

earthly hopes were placed ; and see you now, how they are all likely to be blasted for the sake of a dimpled cheek, and a pair of wanton eyes !—or rather, indeed, I should say, for the sake of the malignant pleasure that is derived from thwarting my purposes ; for, if beauty were what the boy wanted, where should he find beauty to be compared with that of Rubellia ? Indeed, Valerius, I should, before this time, have made you acquainted with my intentions from my own lips, and then, I am sure, there would have been no occasion for such a conversation as this.” Then, after a pause, he continued, more sternly, “ Of a surety, it is my own foolish indulgence which has made my degenerate boy quite forget, not only what is the duty of a Roman son, but what is the power of a Roman father.”

“ Nay, Licinius,” said I, interrupting him, “ I trust there is no need for all this seriousness. Sextus, after all, has only just laid aside the garb of a stripling ; certainly it is too much to be despairing of his suc-

cess in life, only because he is unwilling, at a period so early, to enter upon a connection, which, I am sure, you would be sorry to find him regarding in any other light than that of a permanent one. Is it possible, that, if he really dislike Rubellia, you would wish to see him marry her—only to divorce her, without question, as soon as he should find it possible to do so without inconvenience?”

“ Handsome, rich, noble, and almost as young as himself, why, in the name of all the gods, for what cause should he divorce Rubellia ?”

“ Sir,” said I, “ he loves not Rubellia, nor will ever love her ; and if you cause your son to marry this woman, look you well to it, that the unhappiness of both rest not on your head. Handsome, rich, noble, and young she may be ; but I am sure, she has neither such a heart, nor such a mind, as should belong to the wife of your Sextus. A luxurious woman is Rubellia, and I have seen her find luxury in the contem-

plation of blood. Wed not Rubellia to your son."

"Peace, Valerius," he answered; "what boyish nonsense is this?—I *will* wed Rubellia to my son; and let him see to it, that he tempts me not farther with his disobedience."

Licinius said these last words in a voice of so much earnestness, that I knew not well what answer to make to him; but just while I was hesitating, there came to the place where we were walking among the statues, one of the little boys that were about the house, (I mean the children of the domestic slaves,) who, making his obeisance to Licinius, said, "If it please my lord, the same senator that was here in the morning has returned with two others, and is waiting in the hall."

"Oh! Pontius Mamurra again, I suppose," quoth the orator, and so left me without saying another word; some other business, as it seemed, having immediately recurred to occupy his attention.

But I, for my part, when I heard the name of the visitor, began to understand somewhat of the channel through which my kinsman had been informed concerning what had passed at the Suburban of Velius Capito.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD no leisure, however, to reflect long upon this hint ; for, on coming to my own apartment, I found Sextus waiting there for me, who said, immediately on my entrance, “ Come, Valerius, I have been looking for you all over the house, and I was just about to set off without you. My father has been looking on me this morning with such an aspect of displeasure as I never before witnessed in him, and I know, that if I defer going to the painter, whom he has commanded to execute my likeness, he will be altogether enraged against me at supper-time. I know very well he means the ring, in which it is to be placed, for another present to Rubellia ; but notwith-

standing, what can I do? Any opposition to him in lesser matters would only tend to bring on some final explanation about the great affair itself, and that, whether it be weakness in me or not, I as yet have no courage to encounter. Come along, the man must be expecting me about this time, and there is no use in keeping him idle, since go I must; and as for you, I am sure you will accompany me, for I have much need of you to keep up my heart during so odious a business. Xerophrastes, indeed," he continued, "has been desired to go along with me; but he will be no comfort, for I see plainly, from the drift of his harangues this morning, that he also is enlisted against me. My dear Valerius, I have nobody in the whole world I can trust to but Dromo and yourself."

He had scarcely said so, when we heard Xerophrastes pacing up and down with solemn strides in the gallery; so I knew not how to excuse myself, although I was very anxious to have staid at home for another

purpose, of which I shall speak to you anon. Young Sextus, meanwhile, had taken down my gown from the nail, and he threw it over my shoulders before I had time to say any thing ; and, in a word, the whole three of us were soon on our way to the place of my young friend's ungrateful destination.

In order to arrive at this place, however, we had a considerable part of the city to move over ; for I found that this painter was one of those, who exercise their art during the public hours of the day in the baths of the Palatine, where, as you have heard, in the wide circuit of the princely residence, abundant accommodation is set forth for all such ingenious persons as chuse to make use of it. We proceeded, therefore, along the edge of the river, and by the west of the Capitol, following the line of that great Triumphal Way which has been witness of so many glorious pageants ; for so, they told me, we should most easily ascend into the Cæsarian courts. But when we had come

thither, we found, very unexpectedly, that the whole of the open space, in front of the portico and stairs of Trajan, was occupied by a detachment of the Prætorian cohorts, who were drawn up there in splendid array to receive some promised donative from the bounty of the Prince ; while the martial music, and the clamours of their mustering, had collected all around them enough of spectators to render the passage onwards in some measure difficult. We also by this means were constrained to form part of their attendance, and stood there gazing patiently among the multitude, till such time as they should disperse. Neither was it, in truth, possible for me altogether to lament this interruption ; for the sun shone brightly upon the crests and the spears, and the silver eagles glittered here and there resplendently above the heads of the warriors, and the horses of the Tribunes pawed the ground proudly when the horns were sounding, and the deep silence along the armed

line contrasted nobly with the hum and tumult of the admiring assemblage ; and even the eyes of the stately Xerophrastes caught some animation from the brilliancy of the spectacle before him ; and the enamoured and perplexed Sextus himself, beating time on my shoulder to the notes of the trumpet, seemed to have forgotten for a moment all the anxieties of his situation.

Some horsemen, however, riding along to keep the ground open in front of the soldiery, compelled us to shift our places more to the eastward, where many chariots were drawn up, and in one of these I ere long discovered Rubellia sitting by herself. The lady looked paler by far than I had ever before seen her, and had not the air of being in the smallest degree occupied with what was passing. But I, for my part, did not think it necessary to take any notice of her being there to either of my companions, and was willing, indeed, to keep myself turned away from the place where she sat, in order to avoid any chance of being recognised

by her. Yet there was something in the aspect of her countenance, and in the troubled air of her whole attitude, that in spite of myself prevented me from doing so, and, as it were by a sort of fascination, drew my eyes to the spot that I wished most to avoid. From time to time, therefore, I felt myself constrained to regard the melancholy lady ; and I had not turned round often for that purpose, before Sextus also perceived what it was that attracted my attention—so I discovered sufficiently, although he said not a word, from the fervent pressure with which his fingers suddenly began to lean upon my arm as I stood before him. And at that moment there drew near to the place where her chariot stood, a certain little ugly old woman, with no covering upon her head but long coarse grey clusters of hair hanging matted and twisted all down upon her shoulders, who immediately lifted up a basket of trinkets she had on her arm, and presented it to Rubellia, as if to solicit her to purchase something out of it ; but no soon-

er did Rubellia perceive the basket thrust into her chariot, than she started on her seat, and, looking in the face of the old creature, manifested immediately many signs of no trivial emotion; for her colour, which, as I have told you, had that day quite departed from her, now returned with a sudden and strong flush into her cheeks, and her dim eyes recovered all their animation, and her lips trembled after such a fashion, that it was evident she had something to say which could not possibly regard the gaudy ornaments that were offered to her view in the basket. Whatever it was, however, that she had to say, she did not occupy much time in saying it; for scarcely a minute had elapsed before the basket was lowered again, and the old woman, after whispering something into the ear of the lady, began to move away from her towards another part of the crowd, after which Rubellia sunk back again immediately into the corner of her chariot, and appeared to relapse into much of the same

pensive abstraction from which the old woman's visit had disturbed her.

But many moments had not gone ere I heard a low voice croaking out, "Rings, rings,—amulets and rings!" amongst the crowd that stood immediately behind me; and, looking over my shoulder, I perceived the same old woman with the long grey clusters of hair, already standing close beside us, and pushing forward between Xerophrastes and Sextus the same basket which had been thrust into the chariot of Rubellia. There was a certain wild and outlandish leer upon the tawny countenance of the woman, that, I know not how, affected me with something that was neither fear nor curiosity, but a strange mixture of both; so that, at one moment, my impulse was to interpose some part of the bystanding multitude between me and her; and the next, I could scarcely help moving towards her more nearly than was necessary. But it seemed as if neither to me nor to Xerophrastes was she ambitious of vending

her wares, for she took not the least notice of either of us, or indeed of any others that were near her, except only the young Sextus, whom she began coaxing to buy of her, with all that flow of cunning and low adulation which comes so naturally from the lips of such itinerants.

“My noble youth,” quoth the hag, “my noble, lovely, beautiful young gentleman—my sweet Adonis, my charming lord, do now look into old Pona’s basket—poor old Ponula!—do take a look at Ponula’s rings and amulets—her amulets and rings. Here is one that I could have sold a hundred times for all that it is worth, but I was determined to keep it till I should see the prettiest young gentleman in Rome, and I will never go back to Naples without selling it, after this day; for this beautiful little amulet must be nobody’s but yours. You will break my heart, my lovely prince, if you don’t buy my beautiful little amulet.”

“And what,” said he, blushing and laughing, “may be the virtues of your amulet?”

“Virtues of my amulet!” she replied, twisting her old seamed lips into a faint and fawnish simper. “Do you ask what are the virtues of my amulet? Of a surety, you shall know them.” Then laying her yellow hand upon his shoulder, till she had made him stoop down so that she might get close to his ear, and sinking her voice into a whisper, she began to pour out, with much mysterious volubility, all the story of its marvellous potencies; but what she said even I could not know, only I heard the words, “Æthiopian, Æthiopian,” and “Memnon, Memnon,” and something about “not a pretty lady in Rome”—and a few more disjointed fragments, of which it was not possible for me to make any sense. But just as the woman was most earnest in her whisper, and Sextus, apparently at least, in listening to it, I found my gown plucked hastily from behind, and behold, there was Dromo, with a countenance quite tremulously agitated, and all over as white as a piece of dead parchment, pointing to his

young master and the old hag, and beseeching me to separate them, by motions which were in no wise to be mistaken. How he had come thither, or what was the cause of all his anxiety, I had no time to conjecture, for before I could say a word, he began to bellow out,—“The horses, the horses—make room there for the horses;” and immediately those that stood near him began to move a little, and then, the cry being repeated, those that stood further off mistaking the noise of their feet for that of the actual approach of some new squadron, there arose altogether a sort of rushing among the crowd; and, in a twinkling, the voice of Pona was heard grumbling and croaking at a distance from the place to which our party were borne by the current of its multitudes. Close, nevertheless, did the faithful Cretan stick to us; and no sooner was quiet in some measure restored, and the false alarm he had created at an end, than he whispered into my ear, “For

the sake of all that is sacred, let not that foul hag speak another word to my young master—I will tell you more anon. Meantime, haste ye, haste ye. Make the best of your speed to the Palatine ; it will be much easier for you to push your way thither, than it was for me to come where you are.”

Nor was he satisfied with indicating all this by words alone, but pointing with his finger to a place where there really was some appearance of an opening, he continued, by every fervent gesture in his power, to impress on me the necessity of immediately obeying his directions ; and how to account for this I know not, but indeed there was something in the earnestness of Dromo’s manner, which I found it quite impossible to resist ; insomuch, that even, I believe, without so much display of zeal, he might have accomplished his purpose with me : At all events, the way needed only to be pointed out, in order to its being followed by Sextus and Xerophrastes, who were

already weary of the heat and the pressure of the multitude ; so we were all soon in motion towards the region of which the Cretan had given us notice. It so happened, however, that in the same commotion which had removed us from one part of the crowd to another, the chariot of Rubellia also had changed its situation ; for just as we had escaped, as we thought, from all the tumult, and were about to place our feet on the first step of that great and magnificent flight of stairs that leads up from the New Way to the Augustan Towers, there came to us a lad of that lady's household, who told us his mistress was near at hand, and desirous, if it so pleased us, of our company. So invited, and being aware that we were in sight of Rubellia, what could be done but to follow her bidding ? and we did so accordingly, in spite of all Dromo's warnings to me—nay, I say yet farther, in spite of our own inclinations. We found the lady in her chariot, but not such as we had seen

her before. On the contrary, whether or not the sight of Sextus had produced the change, the whole liveliness of her aspect seemed now to be completely restored to her, and she received us, as it appeared, with all her usual gaiety of address. "Careless men," said she, as we drew near; "I suppose I might have sate here till the Greek Kalends, before any one of you would have observed me."

"Most noble lady," quoth Xerophrastes, "bear it not indignantly, that amidst all the confusion of men and horses, and trumpets and shoutings, our attention was abstracted from that which was really most worthy of our notice; of a surety, my young friends deserve to be excused, since even I, who am not in the habit of being much troubled by such vanities, was myself so much bewildered, that I scarcely knew my right hand from my left, in this human chaos.—Pardon us, most noble Rubellia; we have been unwitting offenders."

“ I believe it—I believe it,” replied the lady, not once looking at the Stoic. “ But I did not call for you to hear useless apologies. What new sight is it that attracts you to the Palatine?—or is it only that you are desirous of exhibiting to Valerius the old-established wonders of the place? In either case, I have half a mind to accompany you. In spite of all they tell us about the Golden House, I can scarcely think the Palatine can have shewn more splendidly than it does now, even in the days of Nero.”

“ Indeed,” said I, as we began to mount together the broad slabbed steps which rise up, tier above tier, in solid magnificence, from the portico that is on the street, to that which hangs on the brow of the ascent,—“ Indeed, it is not easy for me to doubt that Rubellia is in the right.”—For now, on one side, were all the pillars and arches of the Forum stretched out below us, as in a picture ; and, on the other, lay

the stately sweep of the great Circus, topped with its obelisk ; while right before, from above trees and temples, rose the grey cliffs of the Capitoline, with all their crown of domes and proud pinnacles glittering in the glow of the noontide. Imagine to yourselves the space between, all radiant with the arms and banners of those moving cohorts, and confess that my enthusiasm might have been pardoned, even had I been an old man, and less a stranger to spectacles of Roman magnificence. As it fell out, it was partaken by my companions ; for even Xerophrastes did not refrain from some ejaculations of delight. “ Great Rome ! Illustrious imperial Rome ! ” said the Stoic, “ how great is thy sublimity ! ” And then, after a pause of a moment or two, he repeated, in a voice of much majesty, those fine verses from the *Fury of Ajax* :

“ Oh ! might I be where o’er the living deep
Lies the broad shadow of the Sounian cliff,
Waving with all its glorious garniture,

Of rock-sprung foliage : from old Ocean's side,
That I might look on Athens once again !” *

But I confess to you, that at the moment some of the hints which had reached me concerning the real country of his nativity recurring to my recollection, I could not help very wickedly echoing his Greek quotation with another from Virgil, about the wide tracts *ploughed* by the Thracians† — of which impertinence, however, the sage, lost in his own thoughts, took not, or seemed not to take any notice.

Neither, of a truth, was my admiration diminished, when, having gained the top of that massive staircase, or rather, as I should say, that gradiform hill of marble—we passed at length beneath the sounding portal, the sole remnant of the original pile of Augustus, and found ourselves within

* Sop. Ajax. 1235.

————— γενοίμην

‘Ἴν’ ὕλαιν ἐπέσι Ποντῆ, &c.

† Vide Æneid III.

Thracæ arant, &c.

the first of those great imperial quadrangles, by which the whole summit of that once so variously and multitudinously peopled region is now occupied. The light and airy formation of the porticoes all around me—the gracefulness of the pillars—the splendour of the domes—the sublimity of the princely towers—and the universal profusion of elaborate elegance in all things ;—the marble, the brass, the ivory, and the flaming gold, everywhere lavished on arch, metope, and architrave—all conspired for a moment to dazzle my sight, and I stood still to gaze without disturbance on the wide vision of magnificence, with which it had pleased the masters of the world to be surrounded.

“ Behold,” said Sextus, “ where those two equestrian statues of bronze are placed over against each other, on the left hand—I have heard my father say that they mark the sites of two houses, which, in the old time, before Augustus began to enclose the whole Palatine in his walls, were inhabit-

ed, the one by Cicero, the other by Clodius, his enemy ; but now these are all the traces that remain of their mansions."

"In faith," replied Rubellia, "your brazen equestrians are grim-looking riders enough ; but yet, I dare say, they don't cast half such fierce looks on each other, as those two predecessors of theirs whom you have mentioned. I should like to have seen the countenance of old Tully, the morning he went down the hill to deliver his harangue for Milo."

"Nay," said I, "I am very glad that Sextus has told me this ; for I shall always, in reading those famous philippics in time to come, possess a new key to the bitterness of their phraseology, knowing, as I do, that the two lived just over the way from each other, and that the orator could every now and then, when his spirits were flagging, derive a new reinforcement of spleen from merely putting his head out of the window, and contemplating, if not

the person, at least the habitation of his adversary."

"To hear you speak," quoth Rubellia, "one would think you were studying the art of making philippics yourself—I am afraid, that if it be so, my joining your party may prove to have been but an ill-judged thing for my own interests; for, according to this theory, if any of you be preparing to abuse me, my presence will only serve to sharpen your weapons."

"Of a surety, however," interrupted the smiling Xerophrastes, "my noble lady will admit, that, in that case, the converse also will hold good, and that if praise be in meditation, it will not be the feebler because the subject of the intended panegyric has passed before the eyes of the eulogist."

"Most courteous of men," replied the lady, "who will ever talk of the stiffness of the Porch, after the days of Xerophrastes? To-day and yesterday you have paid

me as many compliments as might give a lesson to the gayest trifler about the imperial baths here. If all," she continued, (gazing, as she spoke, with all her eyes upon Sextus,)—"if all were as profuse, I should be unable to sustain the weight of their civilities."

"Nay, Oh ! generous lady," quoth the sage again, "it must be remembered, that, as the poet has expressed it, there are two kinds of shame—there is the wicked shame and the good shame. Why should it be doubted, that a modest Verecundity, not unsuitable to their age, has laid her finger on the lips of our young friends ? I swear by the Victrix of Ida, that your presence itself is that which occasions their silence ;—bear it not ill—bear it not harshly—the young will learn—it is not every one that has seen Corinth."

"No, truly," answered the laughing lady ; "but I doubt whether they that have been so fortunate, have ever seen any thing

half so fine as we are just going to shew to our friend Valerius—let us go at once to the Temple.”

So saying, she pointed to the solemn Doric columns which sustain the portico of the famous Temple of Apollo Palatinus, whose shade lay far out upon the marble court before us, and passing between those brazen horsemen of which we had been speaking, we soon began to ascend the steps that lead up to the shrine. Nor can I tell you how delightful was the fragrant coolness, which reigned beneath the influence of that massive canopy of marble, to us whose eyes had been so long tasked with supporting the meridian blaze of the Italian sun, reflected from so many shining towers and glowing edifices. We entered with slow steps within the vestibule of the Temple, and stood there for some space, enjoying in silence the soft breath of air that played around the flowing fountains of the God. Then passing on, the airy hall of the interior itself received us ; and I saw

the statue of Phoebus presiding, like a pillar of tender light, over the surrounding darkness of the vaulted place ; for, to the lofty shrine of the God of day, no light of day had access, and there lay only a small creeping flame burning thin upon his altar ; but a dim and sweet radiance, like that of the stars in autumn, was diffused all upon the statue, and the altar, and the warlike trophies suspended on the inner recesses, from the sacred tree of silver that stands in the centre,—amidst the trembling enamelled leaves and drooping boughs of which hung many lamps, after the shape and fashion of pomegranates—and out of every pomegranate there flowed a separate gleam of that soft light, supplied mysteriously through the tall stem of the silver tree, from beneath the hollow floor of the Temple.

Now there was no one there when we first came into the place, but I had not half satisfied myself with contemplating its beauties, when there advanced from behind the statue of Apollo, a very majestic

woman, arrayed in long white garments, and having a fillet of laurel leaves twined above her veil, where, parting on her forehead, its folds began to fall downwards towards her girdle. Venerable and stately was her mien, but haughty, rather than serene, the aspect of her countenance. Without once looking towards us, or the place where we stood, she went up immediately to the altar, and began to busy herself in trimming the sacred fire, which, as I have said, exhibited only a lambent and fleeting flame upon its surface. But when, with many kneelings and other ceremonies, she had accomplished this solitary service, the priestess of Apollo at length turned herself again, as if to depart into the secret place from whence she had come forth; and it was then that first, as it seemed, observing the presence of strangers, she stood still before the altar, and regarding us attentively, began to recognize the Lady Rubellia,—whom, forthwith advancing, she saluted courteously, and invited to come with the

rest of us into her privacy, behind the shrine of the God.

So saying, she herself led the way thither, Rubellia walking immediately behind her, and the rest of us in her train. Through several folding-doors did we pass, and along many narrow passages all inlaid, on roof, wall, and floor, with snow-white alabaster and rich mosaic work, until at length we came to a little airy chamber, where three young maidens were sitting with their embroidering cushions, while one, taller than the rest, whose back was placed towards us, so that we saw not her countenance, was kneeling on the floor, and touching, with slow and mournful fingers, the strings of a Dorian lyre. Hearing the sound of her music as we entered, we stood still in the door-way, and the priestess, willing apparently that our approach should remain unknown, advancing a step or two before us, said, "Sing on, my love—I have trimmed the flame—sing on—I shall now be able to listen to all your song; but remem-

ber, I pray you, that the precincts of Phœbus are not those of Pluto, and let not your chaunt be of such funereal solemnity. Sing some gay thing—we solitaries have no need of depressing numbers.”

“ Dear aunt,” replied she that had been thus addressed, without, however, changing her attitude, “ you must even bear with my numbers such as they are ; for if you bid me sing only merry strains, I am afraid neither voice nor fingers may be able well to obey you.”

These words were spoken in a low and melancholy voice ; but guess with what interest I heard them, when I perceived that they proceeded from no other lips than those of Athanasia herself. Sextus also, on hearing them, knew well enough who she was that spoke ; but when he looked at me to signify this, I motioned to the youth that he should say nothing to disturb her in her singing.

“ Then please yourself,” said the priestess, laying her hand on Athanasia’s shoulders ;

“but do sing, for I should fain have my maidens to hear something truly of your music.”

With that Athanasia again applied her fingers to the chords of the lyre, and stooping over them, began to play some notes of prelude, less sorrowful than what we had at first heard.

“Ay, my dear girl,” says the priestess, “there now you have the very secret of that old Delian chaunt. Heavens ! how many lordly choirs have I heard singing to it in unison. There are a hundred hymns that may be sung to it—give us whichsoever of them pleases your fancy the best.”

“I will try,” replied the maiden, “to sing the words you have heard from me before. If I remember me aright, you liked them.”

Then boldly at once, yet gently, did her voice rush into the current of that old strain that you have heard so often ; but it was then that I myself for the first time heard it.

The moon, the moon is thine, O night,
 Not altogether dark art thou ;
 Her trembling crescent sheds its light,
 Trembling and pale, upon thine ancient brow.

The moon is thine, and round her orb
 A thousand sweet stars minister,
 Whose twinkling rays dark wells absorb,
 And all the wide seas drink them far and near.

They kiss the wide sea, and swift smiles
 Of gladness o'er the waters creep ;
 Old hoary rocks rejoice, and isles,
 And there is glory on the slumbering deep

Afar—Along the black hill's side,
 Right blithe of heart the wanderers go,
 While that soft radiance, far and wide,
 Gleams on the winding streams and woods below.

And gaily for the fragile bark,
 Through the green waves its path is shorn,
 When all the murmurs of the dark
 Cold sea lie calm'd beneath that gliding horn.

Yet hail, ye glittering streaks, that lie
 The eastern mountain tops upon !
 Hail, ye deep blushes of the sky,
 That speak the coming of the bridegroom sun !

Hail to the healing beam of day,
 That rouses every living thing !
 The forest gulphs confess thy sway,
 And upon freshening branches glad birds sing.

And loathsome forms, that crept unseen
 Beneath the star-light faint and wan,
 Cower in their brakes the thorns between,
 Dreading that fervid eye, and its sure scan

Triumphant—Welcome life and light !
 Sing rocks and mountains, plain and sea ;
 Fearful, though lovely, was the night,
 Hail to more perfect beauty—hail to THEE !

“ Why stop you, Athanasia ?” said the priestess, finding that here she paused,—
 “ why do you rise up, and take your fingers from the lyre, before you sing out the chorus ?”

“ No more, dear aunt—excuse me—no more. I have already sung all that I can,” replied Athanasia.

“ Nay, then,” says she, “ if you be fatigued, sing not ; but join me, maidens, in the close—perhaps it rises too high for Athanasia.”

And with that the ancient lady herself, joined by the three damsels that had been embroidering, took up the strain, which, indeed, rose higher towards its end.

Hail to thee Phœbus, son of Jove,
Glorious Apollo, Lord of Light,
Hail, lovely in thy Delian grove,
And terrible on Delphos' haunted height !

Hail to thee here beneath the dome,
Great Phœbus, of thy Latian shrine ;
All hail from Cæsar and from Rome ;
Hail by thy dearest name, God Palatine !

But as they were singing the last verse of all, Rubellia also aided their melody with a rich strong gushing voice, which rose far above all the others ; and it was then, for the first time, that the silent Athanasia turned round quickly towards the place where we were standing, and perceived, not without manifestation of alarm, by how many strangers her song had been overheard. On seeing who we were, however, she immediately saluted Sextus and myself with

her usual modest courtesy. Nevertheless, I could see very well that she blushed more deeply than ever when she did so ; and, indeed, I think both my companion and myself blushed at the same moment ; for he could not see Athanasia without thinking of Sempronia ; while I, for my part, after all that had passed, was not likely to be the more composed, because I thought of no one but the maiden herself.

It seemed that the recollection of having seen me, and the strong suspicion of having been recognised by me over against the Prætorian guard-house, had thrown a certain air of trouble over Athanasia's demeanour ; for, after the first glance, I in vain endeavoured to meet her eye ; while, on the contrary, to Sextus she directed both looks, and words, enough to provoke visibly some not altogether benign movements in the proud spirit of Rubellia. Such, at least, was my interpretation of the luxurious widow's aspect, and of the tone of impatience in

which she, after a minute or two had passed, began to urge the propriety of our proceeding to the part of the imperial edifice in which the painter was expecting us.

The priestess of Apollo hearing her say so, courteously offered to guide us beyond the precincts of the temple, and our whole party were again in motion forthwith ; but Athanasia remained behind with the three young damsels, and I, who walked last, saw her, ere the portal received me, preparing again to handle the lyre, with fingers visibly trembling, and a pale countenance, not, as I thought, unstained with some yet more distinct traces of keen emotion. The sight of her agitation fixed my footstep for a moment, and it was then, that on her casting a sudden glance round to the place where I stood, I perceived truly that I had not been mistaken, and that the tears were indeed gathered within her eye-lids. It was no more, however, than one glance, for immediately she stooped again when she saw

who it was that lingered, and, dashing her fingers along the chords of the instrument, appeared to be making an effort at least to bury her thoughts in its harmony. I stood for a moment, and then ashamed of myself, and troubled with her troubles and with my own, I followed the rest into the great library which Augustus placed there beneath the protection of the Palatine Apollo. The priestess parted from us at its entrance, after pointing out a low and massive door of bronze on the right hand, within which, as she told me, the remains of the Sybilline prophecies are preserved, unseen by profane eyes, watched over perpetually by the guardians of the place.

CHAPTER III.

BUT so much was I occupied with thinking on the particulars of Athanasia's behaviour, some of which I have just described to you, that, in truth, neither the closed receptacle of those precious relics of the Sybilline prophecies, nor even the opening view of the great Palatine library itself, were able at first to take hold on my attention. I had walked by the side of my young friend, and behind the Stoic, (who I think was expressing, in his pompous fashion, much admiration of the singing of Rubellia,) along one or two of the great halls in which the library is contained, before the novelty of the objects surrounding me made

any impression even on my eyes ; and even after these were in some measure engaged, my mind still continued to dwell with sorrowful interest on the troubled aspect of the maiden, and on the sweet low notes of her uncompleted song. At length, however, the natural levity of youth, and the fervour of curiosity, attained the victory, for the moment, over my hidden sources of meditation, and I began to be present, not in body merely, in a place where there was so much that might well occupy and interest the mind. The far-receding rows of yellow marble columns conducted my eyes into the interminable recesses of that wide range of stately chambers, in which the records of the thought and spirit of all past ages are piled up together ; and gazing on the loaded shelves which everywhere ascended into the galleries above, I could not but be affected with many new emotions of wonder, and admiration, and reverence. The marble busts of poets and philosophers, which are ranged in front

of the different compartments, seemed to preside, in the calm superiority of long departed greatness, over the undying memorials of intellect and imagination behind them; and I perused the glorious names upon their pedestals, with many thoughts both concerning the majesty and the feebleness of man. Here it was the high filletted front of Homer, that detained, for the first time, the contemplation of one in whose ears, even from earliest infancy, the melodious sublimity of the Mœonian verse had seized and possessed a resting-place of lofty delight. The large eyes of the divine old man seemed, even in sculpture, to be distinctly and visibly blind, while the dreaming serenity of the pale lips below, and the inexpressible sanctity of the towering forehead, revealed how the intense perception at once of the lovely and the great could compensate a thousand fold to the chosen prince of imagination, for all the shut out visions of earthly beauty. There again appeared the large mild visage of

Plato, with all the depth of meditative genius slumbering in its noble lineaments,—while, close beside, the stern piercing glance of the imperious Stagyrte appeared, even in stone, to challenge rightful sway and domination. The beautiful face of Pindar, instinct with the intoxication of rapture—the modest majesty of Sophocles—the sarcastic yet noble pride of Aristophanes—and I know not how many likenesses of how many illustrious compeers, in every walk of intellectual exertion, succeeded each other as we passed along—each in his own sphere, reigning by himself; yet all connected together by a certain common air of visible greatness, like so many successive princes, or glorious contemporary heroes of the same mighty empire.

From the main range of apartments, in which these objects were placed, there diverged on either hand many lesser chambers, in which we saw studious persons en-

gaged in perusing the works of the learned, each seated by himself, and having his eyes fixed attentively on the venerable parchment extended before him. Of these, some took no notice of us as we passed, nor even deigned to intimate, by the smallest movement, their perception that any one had entered upon the place of their retirement ; but others there were with whom Xerophrastes exchanged, as he walked, lofty salutation, and one or two that even entered for a moment into conversation with him, both touching the cause of his visit, and the nature of their own occupations. With one of these, indeed, (he was an ancient Greek of singularly bitter aspect, and with a voice very harsh and unmusical,) to such a length did the colloquy extend, that we began to think we should never be able to get our Stoic away from him, till, as our fortune would have it, it became necessary for them to have a certain book for the purpose of reference, in order to decide a certain point, and then

Xerophrastes began to make inquiries concerning one Parmeno, who, as I gathered, must needs be one of those entrusted with the care of the library.

“ Ah ! do you speak of Parmeno ? ” quoth the other. “ I am afraid, if we must wait for him, we shall not be able to get that invaluable work either this day or to-morrow ; for his young pupil, the son of Fabricius, is dead, and I suppose he will now change his quarters, and be no longer seen so often about these haunts of the muses.”

“ Alas ! ” interrupted Sextus, “ and is it even so ? I met Fabricius in the Forum a few days ago, and he told me his son was ill ; but little did I imagine my dear companion was so near his end. Is it indeed so ? and is young Fabricius dead ? ”

“ Even so,” rejoined the other. “ Rapid, in this instance, of a surety, have been the shears of Atropos ! It is but a few moments ago since Agaso, the painter, passed this way ; and he told me he had just been receiving orders to take the young man’s

likeness, as well as he could, from the corpse."

"If Agaso be so engaged," replied Xerophrastes, "I am afraid we need not expect to find him to-day in his usual place. Perhaps we had better make inquiry for him at the dwelling of Fabricius."

To this Sextus assented ; or rather, being lost in reflection concerning the death of his friend, he suffered himself to be conducted by the rest of us, who followed the guidance of the Stoic. Passing, therefore, through one or two more apartments, we issued forth, and drew near to the vestibule of Fabricius' house, who, as they told me, was a noble Roman, having the chief superintendence of the whole library, and an intimate friend of Licinius ;—one whose domestic calamity could not fail to spread much affliction through a wide circle both of patrician kindred and of personal friends.

And when we came to the vestibule, we found already assembled there not a few of the young man's relations ; but Xerophras-

tes immediately said, "Behold Parmeno, he is the most afflicted of them all; and what wonder that it should be so?"

"It is, indeed, Parmeno," replied Sextus.—"Alas! the bier is already set forth; without doubt, the last rites are to be performed this evening."

This Parmeno was a most sorrowful, but respectable-looking figure, seated close by the bier of the youth, whose education, as it appeared, had been committed to his charge. His head was involved in his cloak, so that only his eyes and nose could be seen, but these of themselves expressed a decorous and philosophical melancholy; and the folds of the cloak fell down over the rest of his figure, in great order and dignity. On the pavement beside him was seen lying, half-unfolded, a book inscribed with the name of Heraclitus, which the philosopher appeared to have been reading. Now, when Xerophrastes approached, this mourner only stretched forth his hand towards him, and shook his head, but he did not say any

thing, nor once look towards us ; and indeed to have done so, would have inevitably disturbed the august attitude in which he had placed himself. Xerophrastes, on his part, received the proffered hand, and shaking his head in response, said, “ Yes, my Ionian friend, I may still bid thee hail and live ; but I must say farewell to the plant thou wast rearing. I must say farewell to the youthful promise of Fabricius.”

On hearing these words, the other philosopher drew his mantle quite over his face, and leant himself heavily against one of the fluted columns of the vestibule, for he seemed to be much shaken. In the meantime Séxtus approached the bier, and contemplated his former companion as he lay there stretched out, and wreathed with melancholy garlands ; and his countenance expressed as he did so, a very afflicting mixture of sadness and astonishment. Neither, indeed, was it possible even for me, that had never before seen the young man, to behold the miserable spectacle without simi-

lar emotions; for his age, as it seemed, could not have been much different from my own, and in all things the pale features of his face were interesting, and their expression not less amiable than solemn.

“ Alas !” said Sextus, “ the last time I saw him, how differently did he appear ! We rode out together with some others to Tibur, and spent all the day there ; and as we returned by the moonlight, how joyous and merry was his conversation. Methinks I yet hear him laughing and speaking. We parted at the foot of the Capitoline, and never did I see him again till now.”

“ Oh fate of man !” quoth Xerophrastes ; “ how uncertain is life, how certain death ! Without doubt, young Fabricius had as little thought of dying as any of your company ; and yet, see now, he is arrayed for the last time, and the juvenile gown, which he should so soon have laid aside for the manly, is destined to be consumed along with him, amidst the blaze of the funeral pile.”

“ Alas ! indeed,” replied Sextus, “ I am sure there is not one of all his acquaintances that will not mourn over him.”

“ A fine lad he was,” cries one of the standers by,—“ a fine lad, and an excellent horseman. The Martian Field did not often behold such a rider in these degenerate days of Rome, and the Roman youth.”

But while the rest were still contemplating the bier, Xerophrastes, turning to his brother philosopher, said, “ Tell me now, my learned friend, do you still, after this mournful event, continue to reside with the elder Fabricius ? Has that excellent man any more sons to be educated, or will he retain you only for the sake of the library, with which assuredly he will find few so conversant as yourself ?”

To which Parmeno replied, “ Your question, O Xerophrastes, is a natural one, and shews that clear judgment concerning the affairs of men, for which you have always been celebrated. No, my friend, the grey-

haired Fabricius no longer requires my residence here ; for he is about to retire into one of his villas on the Campanian shore, and to bury for ever his affliction in the privacy of his woods. We are about to part, not without mutual tears ; and several Patricians have already been applying to him for his influence with me, whom, although unworthy of so much research, they earnestly covet, and wish to engage as the instructor of their young men. I have been sitting here not unseen, beside this my former charge, and each is impatient to solicit me into his service."

" Your reputation I well know is high," replied Xerophrastes, " and deservedly so ; more particularly, for that fine talent you have for giving metaphysical interpretations of mythology, and for explaining the obscure allegories of ancient poets. But for my own part, Parmeno, I find not so much delight in abstract ideas, or in the passive contemplation of the universe ; but

incline rather to study, as heretofore, that part of philosophy which relates to action, and the morality of duty."

"Yes, worthy Xerophrastes," returned he, with a most languid serenity; "and so far as I understand, you sort well in this with the stirring disposition of your friend Licinius."

To which Xerophrastes made answer:—"My patron Licinius is fond of action, and I of the rules of action. He says, it is only in war, or in civil functions of a public nature, that a person can prove himself a man. The rest, he says, is visionary, and comes to nothing, or is a slumber of the mind in sensuality, without thought."

"Does he think, then," quoth Parmeno, with a sarcastic smile,—“Does Licinius think, then, there is no sensuality in perpetual action, and declamation, and noise? To me, such things appear almost as trivial as the lazy enjoyments of Epicureans, besides being harsh and disagreeable, and not unfrequently ridiculous. But observe, O

Xerophrastes ! that I speak these things as it were abstractly, and not by any means in disparagement of Licinius, your excellent patron and friend.”

To which the Stoic replied, in astonishment—“ What is this you have said ? Do you assert that action is sensual ?”

Then Parmeno, lifting from the pavement the book which he had been reading, or appearing to read, said, “ It is even so, most erudite Xerophrastes. Indeed, I have always delighted in the most primitive and remote doctrines handed down from antiquity ; and among others, in the riddles of this obscure Ephesian. Following the scope of his philosophy, I am led to believe, that, so often as the mind impels, or is impelled by other causes, it begins to lose sight of pure knowledge, and becomes in danger of thinking that every thing is vain, light, and evanescent, except what is perceived by the senses. Heraclitus thinks, that Love and Hatred govern all things. Now, when the

principle of Discord prevails, it subjects all things to the dominion of action, and to the gross perceptions of sense. But when that of Love is prevalent, it emancipates the struggling chaos of things from the yearning of compulsion, and from the darkness of sensual proximity ; for, between things that struggle immediately against each other, light has no room to enter in and shine ; and therefore it is, that, when Love gains the ascendancy, a new arrangement is produced—an arrangement, that, if I may so express it, is more serene, transparent, orderly and divine, and wherein things exist in safety from the danger of mutual destruction.”

To which learned speech Xerophrastes, after a preliminary cough, made answer :—
 “ My opinion coincides rather with that of Empedocles, the immortal Sicilian. He thinks that Discord is the only separating and arranging principle which marks the boundaries between things, and enables

them mutually to act and repel, in such a way as to preserve order."

"Nay, nay," interrupted Parmeno, his hands being by this quite disentangled from his cloak, and his countenance considerably lighted up,—“Nay, nay, to such doctrine I never shall assent. From Empedocles—even from Xerophrastes, I must differ for ever on this head. The order of which you and the Sicilian speak, is the order of darkness only, and of blind force,—a kind of order in which fierceness and cruelty always reign.”

But Xerophrastes continued:—“And I must confess, that I further concur with Empedocles in thinking, that Love is a principle of which the predominance is more fit to turn order into a chaos, than to produce the effects you have described.”

“Nay, speak not against Love,” quoth Parmeno—“Speak not against Love, nor believe that any respect is due to the dictates of Empedocles, who taught the worst that can be taught by any man—that is to

say, the alternation of order and confusion succeeding each other throughout all time. To seek for truth in conceptions like these, is no better than to seek repose in the bosom of *Ætna*."

"In reference to that point," resumed *Xerophrastes*, "I agree with you in your disapprobation of *Empedocles*. But when you say, that Love is the source of knowledge, you much astonish me; for I have always thought rather that its tendency is to bring confusion upon the mind."

"Once more," said *Parmeno*—"once more, let me beseech you to say nothing against love. You are thinking of the love of particular objects. You speak of *Cupid*, and not of that heavenly *Eros*, who, so far from enchaining, or tyrannizing over the mind, rather enables it to escape into the tranquil freedom of far extended contemplation. But what is contemplation without the knowledge of permanent forms, on which the mind may find repose, and so keep itself from being perplexed by the

shifting aspects of the many-coloured universe? And therefore it is, oh Xerophrastes, that, sometimes laying aside Heraclitus, I study the ancient verses of the poet, Xenophanes, who shews, by the nature of abstract forms, that a certain unity pervades all things. Xenophanes mused of old at Colophon, looking through the blue ether of my native Ionia.—But why should I speak thus at length? Alas! what is the occasion of our being here!—I perceive the approach of the poet, who was to compose an inscription for the urn of my dear Fabricius. Yonder also is the architect, who comes with a design for the tomb. Oh! day of woe, that I should sit in judgment concerning the epitaph and tomb of my ingenuous youth!”

“It is, indeed, true,” replies the solemn Xerophrastes, “that even I, in the repercussions of our talk, had well nigh forgotten all this sorrowful occasion; but, perhaps, there is something not after all en-

tirely inexcusable in our giving so much superiority to the affairs of philosophical discussion. Now, however, it is evident, that we must suspend our colloquy—And who, I beseech you, above all things, is he that now draws near to the place of this mournful assembly, holding a horse in his hand. Methinks I have seen his face before.”

“That you have indeed, Master,” quoth he that had come up,—“that you have; and no longer ago than yesterday neither, if you will be pleased to give yourself the trouble of recollecting me. My name is Aspar, I am well known in every Feeder^{*} in Rome, and they that know me best will give every assurance concerning my superiority to any thing in the semblance of a trick. If my excellent friend the noble Centurion Sabinus were here,

* Vivarium.

poor old Aspar would have no reason to complain of the want of a good word."

"Good morrow to you, Aspar," said Sextus, for he could not help remembering the attention which the Numidian had manifested at the Amphitheatre; "but what is it that brings you hither just at this moment? And for what purpose have you brought your horse along with you? for people of your sort do not in general ride on horseback in the courts of the Palatine."

"Alas!" quoth Aspar, "and is it you, who seem to have been one of the contemporaries of that peerless youth—is it you that ask such a question as this? I did not, in truth, imagine that there was any friend of young Fabricius, who did not know his affection for little Sora. There is not such another filly within twenty miles of the Capitol; but I brought her hither merely out of regard for the family, some of whom I thought might be very anxious to possess a pretty creature of which the dear boy had been so fond. As

for myself, I should never bear to look on her again with pleasure, after knowing the sudden manner of his death. I wish to Heaven the filly were fairly lodged in one of the paddocks of the Lord Fabricius himself."

"Lead the animal round into the court," quoth Parmeno, "and I doubt not care will be taken of her.—Yonder comes one of the buffoons of the theatre;—he, I doubt not, is here to disgrace, if he be permitted, this solemn scene, with ranting quotations from the tragic poets. Alas! alas! I cannot bear all this: There also advance the officiators from the Temple of Libitina; they have their cypress boughs ready in their hands. O, my learned friend, I cannot sustain these things; let me be gone into the mansion."

And when he had said so, the admirer of Heraclitus picked up his favourite scroll, and gathering together the folds of his mantle, moved slowly into the house, and Xerophras-

tes followed him with similar gestures ; and Sextus and I also were about to take our departure ; and he, having procured from one of the slaves of the house a myrtle garland, had already placed it upon the bier of the young Fabricius, as the last testimonial of his concern ; when there drew near two young men, clad in long mantles of black, who also seemed to have been before acquainted with my friend, for, on seeing him, they immediately went up and began to exchange with him many expressions of grief and lamentation. But while they were speaking so together, Rubellia, who had been standing all this while a little apart, sent a boy to inform us that the painter we were in search of had at last made his appearance, and was anxious to proceed with his portrait. I drew Sextus away, therefore, and soon joined the lady and the artist ; but as we were moving off thus, one of the by-standing slaves, an old grey-headed man, came up and whispered to us, “ These two

that you have been speaking with, are to me the most disagreeable part of all this preparation. You have heard their lamentation, and seen their sweeping raiment of mourning ; but they are nephews of Fabricius, and I think the chief subject of their reflection is, the probability that one or other of them must be adopted by my bereaved old master. Alas ! alas ! so goes all between Lucina and Libitina. There was never a birth nor a marriage that did not create some sorrow, nor a funeral procession that did not give rise to some joy. Your rhetoricians talk, but what avails it all ? Slaves and masters are all alike subjected to the evils of the world, and of these death is both the last and the least."

Little Agaso, the painter, was an amusing character, and even in his exterior there was so much of the amusing, that I wish I had for a moment fingers like his, that I might give you the pleasure of surveying his portrait. Imagine, however, since

that is all you can do, a smart dapper little bandy-legged man of Verona, dressed in a Grecian mantle, and endeavouring, in every particular, to look as much as possible like a Greek. Had Xerophrastes not gone off with his brother of Ionia, I have no doubt this man would have made his presence a sufficient excuse for speaking nothing but Greek to us ; but, even as it was, his conversation was interlarded with an abundant intermixture of the phraseology of that noble tongue. Nothing could be spoken of which Agaso did not think fit to illustrate, either by the narration of something he himself had seen or heard during his residence at Athens, or, at least, by some quotation from some of the Grecian poets, of whom it seemed to me that Menander and Anacreon were his foremost favourites. To judge from the square, and somewhat ponderous formation of the man's features, Nature had not designed him for any of the most mercurial specimens of her workmanship ; but he contrived, notwithstanding,

by perpetual shrugging and grimacing, and, above all, by keeping his eyes and eye-brows continually in motion, to give himself an air of no inconsiderable life and vivacity.

Hopping before us with much alacrity, this little artist soon conducted our steps through seven, eight, or ten galleries, opening off each other, until at length a certain curtain being withdrawn, which had covered the space between two pilasters, we found ourselves in a spacious and brilliant apartment, which, from the superior courteousness wherewith he bowed us into it, there could be no difficulty in perceiving to be the customary sphere of his own exertions. It was not altogether deserted nor solitary, even when we entered; but the removal of the intervening curtain soon attracted many more of the loungers of the baths, and ere poor Sextus was fairly fixed in the proper attitude before the table of the painter, the modest youth had the mortification to find himself surrounded with a very crowd of knowing and cu-

rious physiognomies. The presence of these, however, if it might have been gladly dispensed with by Sextus, appeared, most assuredly, to be quite the reverse of unwelcome to the master of the room. On the contrary, there arose between the little man, as he was preparing his brushes, and those who had come to survey him at his work, such a learned gabble of mutual compliments, remarks, and disquisitions, that it seemed to me as if he would have been quite disappointed, had he not been favoured with their admiring attendance.

The walls all around being covered with different specimens of Agaso's workmanship, there was no want of subjects for every sort of conversation likely to interest his ears.

"How noble," cries one, "is that large portrait you have just been finishing of Rupilius!—Heavens! with what felicity you have caught the august air of that dignified man! Methinks I see him just about to enter the Basilica, when he knows that

some great cause is awaiting his decision. What solemnity in his aspect ! what grandeur in the gown !—How finely the purple of the laticlave is made to harmonize with the colouring of the cheeks and chin ! What beautiful handling about the fingers with which he grasps his tablets !—As for the head of the stylus, it is the very eye of the picture.”

“ Exquisite indeed,” quoth another of these knowing characters ; “ but who can look at it, or at any thing else, in the same room, with this charming little jewel ?—Heavens ! what a beauty ! who can it be ? for I never saw her either at the Circus or the Amphitheatre, or at any other place of resort. What an inimitable picture of modesty and loveliness is this girl !”

The little painter heard this last piece of eulogy with an air of some little embarrassment, and at the same time looked very cunningly towards the person who had uttered it. But the Lady Rubellia tossed her head, as if indignantly, and whispered

to me, “ Pretty she may be, though I can’t say that style of dressing her hair is at all adapted for such features ; but, as for modesty, I should like to see what part of her face it is in which that is so visible. I asked Agaso two or three days ago, who it was, and he told me it is a little Spanish girl, whom that august-looking person, with the grand laticlave, and the purple cheeks and chin, and the glittering stylus, thought fit to bring with him from Spain, when he was relieved from the hard duties of the Pro-prætorship,—which, without doubt, her agreeable society had enabled him to go through with better than that of his own wife would have done. I dare say, he takes good care she shall not be seen either at Circus or Amphitheatre ; and, indeed, I think it is sufficient impudence to shew her likeness in this way, in the company of so many portraits of respectability. But there is no saying how far these enamoured old dotards will go. Impudent minx that it is,

I think if the wife of this same Rupilius were to hear of its being here, she would do well to come and scratch its eyes out. I have no patience for such audacity."

"My dear lady," quoth the painter, who overheard somewhat of what she was saying—"my dear Lady Rubellia, for the sake of all that is sacred, don't say a word about this to any one again; wait at least till the canvass for the Augurship be over, and then, if you will, you may say any thing about it you please. But just at present Rupilius would be very angry if any of these affairs were made more public than is necessary; for there are always enough of people to exaggerate and misrepresent."

"Exaggerate, indeed!" replied the lady—"there is much room for exaggeration, forsooth. For my part, I think Rupilius ought to be ashamed of himself; and at his time of life too."—Then sinking her voice into a note almost inaudible, she added, "I think you said he was just the same age with my own uncle?"

“ Yes,” says the painter, “ I think he must be about the same standing ; and I think he went to Spain just about the period of your own marriage.”

“ Filthy old fellow,” quoth she very quickly ; “ and this is what he has brought home with him ! I have a great mind to tell his wife.”

“ Hush, hush,” said Agaso ; “ if you do so, you will ruin me. Besides, this is the very day Rupilius spoke of bringing her to see his own portrait ; and, indeed, I am sure that is the old Senator’s hem, in the adjoining gallery. They will be here in an instant. I rely on your prudence.”

And no sooner had Agaso said so, than, of a surety, the portly original of the lat-claved portrait walked into the room, having his gown, and every part of his dress, arranged, in all things, after the same fashion represented in the picture ; although, in the living countenance, it was easy to discover not a few deep lines and spots which had

been cautiously omitted in the copy. By his side moved a short pursy woman, arrayed in the extremity of gaudy and costly attire, whose own naturally dark and swarthy complexion did not, in spite of all the arts of cosmeticism, harmonize very well with the bright golden ringlets of her Sicambrian peruke; while behind the pair came a thin damsel, whose scraggy lineaments exhibited a sort of faint shadow, or type, as it were, of the same visage, the rudiments of which had been so abundantly filled up in that of the broad and rubicund old magistrate, her father.

“There now,” quoth Rubellia, perceiving their approach; “just see with what effrontery this ancient libertine struts into the room; and his wife and daughter, too, are along with him. Oh, dog-eyed audacity!—and yet it is scarcely possible to observe the groupe without laughing.”

But if she, or any of the rest of us, felt any inclination to smile on the very first

appearance of the party, I leave you to judge how much this inclination must have been increased by what passed after they had begun to make their observations on the work which they had come to examine. For the ex-pro-prætor himself, after saluting Agaso, stood still with an air of infinite dignity, in the midst of the apartment, while the fond daughter, rushing close up to his picture, could with difficulty affix any limits to her expressions of the satisfaction with which it inspired her. The little fat Metulla also (for so his wife was named) devoured its features at first with eyes of rapture; but she ere long began to see and to say, that, after all, imperfect justice had been rendered to the manly charms of her lord.

“ Oh Jupiter !” quoth the young damsel, “ if papa were not here himself, I should expect the wood to speak to us, so perfectly does this resemble him ! Look at the very ring upon his finger. It is the very

ring he wears ! One can see the very images that are engraved upon it ; one can see the three Graces that papa always seals with. I never saw such a picture—when will it be brought home ?”

“ Hush, hush, now, Primula, my darling,” quoth the mother. “ It is certainly an astonishing likeness ; but I don’t understand what it is that makes painters, now-a-days, paint people older than they are. I am sure your papa, girl, does not look near so old as in this picture. It may be like him hereafter ; but he should have been represented much younger just now. And besides, it wants something of his expression. Don’t you think so now yourself, sir ?” (turning to the painter). “ Don’t it strike yourself that you have given him too sombre a look ? Rupilius has surely been looking very gloomily when he sat to you.”

On this the painter leaving Sextus, advanced to the side of Metulla, and after a pause of some moments, spent in contem-

plating alternately his own work and the original, said, with a courteous simper, "How much am I indebted to you, most noble lady, for this visit, and these judicious remarks! Without doubt, you must be the best judge. But as for me, I only wish you had accompanied the senator when he was sitting to me, and then, without question, his countenance would have worn the look you desiderate; and I perhaps might have more easily succeeded in catching it, being aided by your suggestions. But ladies do not know how their lords look at times, when they themselves are not present. I have painted the senator; but I have missed—I perceive it too plainly—I have missed something of the man. I hope it may yet be amended."

"How modest he is!" ejaculated the flattered spouse—"How modest he is, with all his genius!—A single sitting will suffice, I am sure, to give it every thing it wants. We shall come," added she, in a

lower tone—" we shall come some day when you are quite alone, and I will sit by you, and talk to Rupilius all the while, and that will keep senate-meetings and edicts, and all that stuff out of his head, and you shall paint him just when he has his own smile on his face."

" Delightful!" replied the artist ; " how happy shall I be in having such an opportunity of improving both the picture and myself! We must positively prevail on the senator to give us this one sitting more ; for, consider only, had the picture been for the Senate, or for Cæsar, or for the Province, or any public place, it might have been well, perhaps, to leave it almost as it is ; but the case is very different in a domestic portrait. In regard to that, the usual domestic expression should, above all things, be sought for ; and the ideas of intelligent private friends should especially be consulted by the artist."

" Never ask his consent," quoth Metulla, smiling upon her lord ; " leave the whole

matter to me. I have resolved, and that is enough. The picture is for me, and I am determined to have it done according to my own wishes. And besides, if he were to refuse me, I know how I should be certain to overcome him ; for he has asked me to sit to you myself, and you know if I were to persist in sitting with my gloomy face, as he has with his, he would be so much mortified, that we should soon bring him to his right reason."

" *Your* gloomy face, noble lady !" replied the artist, strutting back a pace or two. " I am afraid, if that is the charm by which alone he is to be softened, we must give up all our hopes. Which day of the Greek calends shall I say my Lady Metulla is to sit with her gloomy face ?"

" Ha ! ha ! ha !" quoth Metulla ; " you are such a wag. I protest I believe you will keep me laughing, in spite of myself, all the time I am sitting. And pray now, what dress do you think I should wear ?

Prima says, I ought certainly to be in green ; but I was thinking, that perhaps a yellow byssine would suit me better. But I shall send over half a dozen robes, and then we can choose whichever seems to be the best. One thing only I am quite resolved upon, and that is, that I shall have my golden chain, with the little miniature of the Pro-prætor—the Senator, I mean—(he is no longer Pro-prætor, you know)—at the end of it.”

“Nothing could be better—nothing could be in finer taste,” he made answer ; “and if my lady should think of green, or blue, or purple, or any dark colour for the gown, the rings of the golden chain, and the setting of the miniature, would come in so beautifully, they would have the richest effect in the world. O ! by all means, let us have the chain and the miniature.”

“And do, my dear mother,” interrupted Prima, “and do have on the sapphire tiara when you sit to Agaso ; for, you know,

every body says you look better with it than any other head-dress."

"We shall consult Agaso and your papa, my dear, and whatever they think fittest shall be the thing."

"Or what would you think," continued Prima, "of having your own hair simply like this lady here?"—(It was that of the Spanish girl she meant.)—"What a pretty face!—Well, if I were to be painted, I should like to be dressed exactly like this."

"A smart little girl, indeed," quoth the mother. "I think I should know that face. I am sure I have met with that young lady somewhere—though where or when I have not the least idea. Is she a Roman lady, Agaso?"

"No, not a Roman lady," answered the artist; "nor do I think my lady can ever have met with her. But perhaps my Lord Rupilius may, for she is a Spaniard."

Agaso, on saying so, turned with a smile of indescribable cunning to the Senator; but he, scarcely appearing to look at the

picture, answered, with great gravity, "I think I have seen the countenance before; and perhaps it was in my province. The face is certainly a pretty one; but nothing so very extraordinary."

"No, no," echoed Metulla; "nothing so very extraordinary. The girl might be a beauty in Spain; but I am sure she would be nothing extraordinary in Rome."

"Well now," said Prima, "I am no judge; but I do think her very handsome, and I am sure she must be noble, although a provincial, for she has not the least vulgarity in her look."

"No, not exactly vulgarity—far from it," quoth Metulla; "but yet how one misses the air of the Capital. They may say what they like," added she, drawing herself up; "but there is no such thing as a really urbane air to be got out of Rome."

"Was my Lady Metulla ever in Greece?" said the painter, bowing low as he spoke.

"No, indeed," quoth she, with a titter—
"No, indeed. Greece may be Greece, but

Rome's Rome. Rome's enough for me; I have no curiosity to see Greece, I assure you."

"Good Heavens, now!" interrupted the daughter—"I, mamma, am surprised to hear you say so. I should so like to be in Greece. There are so many pretty things to be seen in Greece—they make all the prettiest rings and bracelets in Greece, don't they?"

The question was addressed to Agaso, who, bowing again, but looking a little grave, said, "In Greece, or by those who have been in Greece, certainly. There is nothing to be done in any of the arts, without having seen Greece. But it was of the ladies of Greece that we were speaking."

"And what think you of the ladies of Greece?" quoth Metulla, returning to the charge. "I hope you will not say that they are superior to those of Rome. I have a notion they don't pay for what they have so well, however."

"Let it be admitted," answered the smiling Agaso; "how should poor Greece

equal Imperial Rome in such points as these? But I cannot give up my old friends the Greeks, notwithstanding—and more particularly, the Greek ladies. They are beautiful graceful creatures; that every one that has seen them must admit.”

“Graceful indeed!” quoth Metulla. “I believe, if the truth were known, they are no better than they should be.”

“And yet I must own,” continued the artist, with another bow to Metulla, “that they do want some things which the Roman ladies have. There is a certain dignity, as it were—a certain noble tranquillity, that I never saw anywhere but in Rome.”

To which last speech Metulla vouchsafed no answer; but I saw that it had produced the intended effect; for, while she was hearing it, a soft flutter of satisfaction appeared to pass over her chubby cheeks, and the unsuspecting matron became visibly lost in a maze of complacent meditations on its close.—The pause in that conversation allowed me to overhear something of what

was passing in another part of the room, where some other picture appeared to be exciting, among another set of observers, a scarcely inferior measure of curiosity. On going up to them, I perceived that it was a sketch, in chalk only, of the head and shoulders of an old white-bearded man, which was occupying their attention ; and when I had gained an opportunity of more nearly surveying it, I recognized without difficulty, and not, as you will believe, without interest, the features of the same Thraso, who had died on the preceding day at the Flavian Amphitheatre. The greater number of those who were looking on it, seemed also to have been present at his death ; for I heard pointed out by them with exactness the parts in which the resemblance had been most successfully taken. The beauty of the old man's lineaments, and the serenity of his aspect they all admired ; and while they were loud in praising these, Agaso himself also joined them, saying, " Oh, so you have found out my old

Christian. How did you get hold of him? for I meant it not to be seen till I had lain on a little of the colour. But is it not a fine study?—is it not a noble head? I think I shall introduce it in the picture I am painting for Pliny. The subject is the sacrifice of Iphigenia—Don't you think it would do gloriously for the head of one of the priests?"

"A priest!" quoth one of the loungers; "I was afraid you were going to make it serve for the head of the victim. It is only taking away the beard, and painting the hair black, and a few more trivial changes such as that; and Poets and Painters can do far more wonderful things than turning age into youth. Your ugly old infidel might really make a very fine Iphigenia."

"Ha! ha! Curio," replied the artist, "you must always have your joke, Curio; but seriously, do you not admire the old head? I went to the Amphitheatre rather late without expecting any thing particular; but you know a painter never goes any

where without his tablets, and when I saw the man come in, it immediately struck me that he might be turned to some account. I made several little sketches of him, for it was a long time ere it was over; and this is from the one I took just after he had made his oration to Trajan. His hands and feet were singularly fine, I thought. Here," said he, turning over the leaves of his tablets,—“here you have him in a variety of shapes! here, this now is the knee; the muscles shewed powerfully when he knelt on one knee;—there again you have his fingers as they were folded on his breast—not much flesh, but the line very good—and the veins well expressed. I think one of the priests might stand in that attitude very properly, just at the moment when Agamemnon is supposed to be about to utter the final word.”

“Well,” replied another; “for my part, I think the resignation of the Christian must have been rather a different sort of thing from that of Agamemnon’s priests.”

“ Priest indeed !” interrupted Metulla, who by this time had been able to bear herself away from her ex-pro-prætor’s likeness—“ Do you talk of making a priest out of a Christian ? I wonder you are not afraid of such a blasphemous thought. For me, if I had a picture of an atheist in my house, I should expect the roof to fall in. And yet here, where you have temples on every side of you, and the whole Capitoline within view, you speak of turning this old infidel into one of Agamemnon’s priests ! Jupiter and Apollo preserve us ! to make a priest out of a Christian !”

“ Poh, poh !” quoth the critic, who had been speaking before ; “ these wicked artists have no thought about such things as these. I think we may consider ourselves as very lucky in not having heard him proposing to turn the old fellow into a God. I have heard of such things. But I believe I should say nothing about that, for I once sate for a God myself ; and although I am

not quite so bad as a Christian, I really think I was unworthy of such an honour."

"You are very modest, indeed, sir," replied the lady, with a countenance of some little indignation; "and if one may take the liberty to ask such a question, pray, what God was it that had the honour to have you sit for his likeness?"

"Why—Janus—I think it was Janus," answered Curio; "yes, and now I remember me, Agaso here had the impudence to paint his own likeness for the other face of the deity. I believe the representation was pretty generally admired."

"Yes, by two at least in the city," replied the little fat lady, very tartly.

"You are forgetting the young ladies," returned the placid Curio. "So many of them fell in love with it, that Agaso and I were weary of it. There was no peace till the picture of Janus was shut up—ha! ha!"

"I really don't approve of this conversation," quoth Metulla, "and I hope few that are here approve of it any more than my-

self.—Come, come, Prima, my love, it is high time to be going. 'This is no place for us, when such talk is permitted.'

So saying, this pious female walked away, escorted by her husband and her daughter. She and Prima kissed their hands, as if to bid good bye to the picture of the old Senator, as they passed it, and the whole party were soon at such a distance, that Curio and some of the company thought it safe to indulge in a laugh at their expence. But of all the laughers, there was not one that laughed more heartily than Rubellia herself.

"Cunning old rogue," quoth she, "I was much inclined to have betrayed him once or twice; but, in spite of myself, I can scarcely help taking part with him, now that I have seen this creature, whom he has the misery to call wife.—Who, in the name of Hermes—who is she? and how does a man of his rank happen to have burdened himself with such a bundle of disgrace?"

"Good Jove!" says Curio, "is it possi-

ble that there is any one ignorant of the history of Rupilius, and his celebrated marriage? I thought the whole story had been as public as the Pantheon."

"I have heard his name," replied she, "and that oftentimes; but I never was told any thing in particular, either about him or his history."

"Why, after all," was Curio's answer; "there is nothing so very particular, I believe, either to be told or to be heard. The father of this Rupilius was a considerable favourite about the court of Claudius; and if Narcissus had lived, might have risen to the first honours of the state; but he fell gradually into neglect after the death of that great freedman, and I believe was at last forbid to come to the Palatine by Nero; though I know not whether, as was the case with Vespasian, that punishment was inflicted on him for not sufficiently applauding the singing Emperor's voice. However, the man was humbled in his spirit, and having squandered away the best part of his

patrimony, during the days of his dancing attendance on Narcissus, he was fain to make up his purse again, by sending his son down to the dock-yards ; and the young Rupilius married, in short, this Metulla, the charming daughter and sole heiress of a certain ancient Ligurian, whose person was well known in the markets, and his name familiar to all frequenters of courts of justice. In the course of the many strange revolutions that have taken place, it is no great wonder that the husband of Metulla should have been sent as Pro-prætor into Spain ; neither, being sent thither, is it very wonderful that he should have left Metulla behind him. In short, I see nothing wonderful about the matter. Such things happen in Rome every day, and nobody stares at them. I was just thinking of taking a walk by the river-side some day soon, and seeing whether it may not be possible to pick up some other little Metulla for myself."

But about this time the great bell rung

in the tower above the Baths, and Curio and the greater part of the young loungers, that were about Agaso, soon dispersed themselves ; some to fence or wrestle—others to play in the tennis-court—others to ride in the Hippodrome, in preparation for the taking of the bath ; insomuch, that the painter, being left alone with Sextus, Rubellia, and myself, had at length leisure to proceed more diligently with his portrait of the youth. Much did the lady and the painter discourse, and many merry things were said by them both ; but all they said could not entirely remove the embarrassment fixed on the countenance of Sextus ; nor of a truth, did he in any sort present himself with much advantage before the eyes of the artist. Rubellia, nevertheless, sate over against him with looks of no severe criticism ; and I think gazed on him at least as attentively as the painter.

I doubt not she would have remained to the end of the sitting, had not one of her household come with a message to her,

which, as it seemed, rendered necessary her departure. It struck me, that the messenger answered very well to Dromo's description of the fat Calabrian with whom he and Boto had been drinking ; but of this I said nothing to Sextus.

It was very near the hour of supper before we were dismissed, and we found Licinius already about to enter the eating chamber when we reached home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE orator received us both with less coldness than I could have expected, after the conversation he had held with me in the morning; but I suppose it was his knowledge that the intervening hours had been spent in Rubellia's company, at the Augustan Library,* which had, in some measure, softened his feelings of jealousy towards his son; and perhaps he had given me credit for advice and interference, to the merit of which I had, in fact, no claim. Howbeit, it was easy to see that his mind was still far from being perfectly at rest, and that, in spite of the effort he made to

* The original Library had been destroyed in the conflagration of Nero; and the establishment suffered again in the time of Domitian. But it had been diligently restored, as far as possible, by Nerva and Trajan.

occupy himself and his company with indifferent topics of conversation, he could never entirely disengage his own thoughts from those domestic concerns, which had produced an impression so serious on spirits naturally, as you have heard, above all others buoyant and elastic.

But he remained not long at table after supper was concluded, being summoned to discourse in private with a client, who had that day arrived in Rome from some remote district of Italy ; so that Sextus and I were left at leisure to spend the remainder of the evening as it might please ourselves ; for, as to Xerophrastes, he had not as yet made his appearance, and we took it for granted he had remained at the sorrowful mansion of Fabricius, for the purpose of consoling, with philosophical discourses, his bereaved brother of Ionia. We retired, therefore, into the apartment of my young friend, where, if either books, or musical instruments, or wooden-swords for fencing, had been gifted with any power of amusement, we could have had no reason to com-

plain of tedium. But although each of these methods was resorted to in turn, they were all very much in vain.

Poor Sextus could not read a page in any of his favourite poets, without coming upon some verse which made him throw down the scroll to ruminate on the charms of his Sempronia. When he took up his lute, his fingers seemed spontaneously to evoke only the most melancholy of sounds ; and ere long, those trembling fingers were sure to wander from the melody, while tears were gathered in his eyes, or coursed each other, slow and large, down his guileless cheeks. It was only in the more violent exercise of the foil, that he succeeded in banishing from his thoughts the troubles of his situation ; but both of us having contended till we were breathless, were soon compelled to sit down, and then the unhappy boy's exhausted body seemed to communicate a new infusion of debility to his harassed mind. When I looked on him sitting in the corner, the tears dropping ever and anon

on his folded hands, and the purple glow of the setting sun gleaming on the disordered ringlets of his glossy hair, I could not help feeling all my soul dissolved with pity within me ; and if I did not entirely forget my own situation in the contemplation of his, I am sure my sympathy was not the less sincere, because I had both love and perplexities of my own.

We sat over against each other for the most part in silence, (for I soon found that I could not say any thing capable of effectually interesting him,) until the shades of evening had quite darkened the chamber, and then we walked together, not less silently, in the adjoining open gallery, until the moon had arisen from above the tall poplars around the Pantheon and Baths of Agrippa, and diffused her radiance over all the beautiful gardens and noble edifices that lay beneath us, down to the brink of the river. Lassitude of spirit then, if not expectation of sleep, rendered Sextus desirous of retiring to his couch ; so, having exhort-

ed the youth to wrestle with his grief, and to call Hope to his aid, I at length left him to himself. But as for me, I had as yet no feeling of weariness, and, besides, I remembered the promise I had made to Dromo in the morning; I therefore had my lamp lighted, and set myself to read in my chamber, hoping thereby at least to sooth my mind, and so prepare myself better either for quiet slumber, or for taking a part in any thing that might tend to the benefit of my friend.

I was very much surprised, indeed, that the Cretan had not as yet come to me, and made inquiry concerning him of Boto; but hearing from him that the man was absent from the house, and that no one knew what had become of him, I thought from this there was the more likelihood of his being engaged in some scheme, the result of which I should by and by learn from his own lips. I dismissed my Briton, therefore, and, as I have said, prepared me to read by my watch-light, and while I was

considering what I should read, I remembered the scroll I had received from Thraso, which forthwith I took from the place in which I had locked it up on the morning of the preceding day. There fell from out of it, as I unfolded it, a letter sealed, but without any superscription. This I of course considered as meant only for the eye of Athanasia; so I kissed the parchment her fingers were destined to touch, and before I began to read, restored it to the receptacle from which it had been taken.

Now some of you, my young friends, that now listen to me, have already heard me speak, on another occasion, of the impression which that night's reading made upon my mind, and been told, from my own lips, what book it was that was contained in the scroll of Thraso; the rest of you will judge for yourselves with what astonishment it was that I, who had at the best expected to unfold some obscure treatise of Asiatic lore, some semi-barbarous

exposition of mystical riddles, found myself engaged in the perusal of a plain and perspicuous narrative of facts, written evidently by a man of accomplishment and learning, and in Greek, of which the most elegant penman of these times could have had no occasion to be ashamed. In a word, it was the Gospel of the holy physician St Luke, which had been put into my hands ; and at this day I am still grateful that this was the first of the Christian books which I had an opportunity of seeing ; for such had been my education, that I am afraid others, not less worthy of the true faith, might have repelled me by the peculiarities of their composition, as well as by the acquaintance with many things, to me then entirely unknown, which they take for granted in the style of their commencement. Here, however, there was enough only of mystery, the more effectually to stimulate my curiosity, while the eagerness with which I engaged myself in its gratification, was abundantly repaid from the beginning,

both by the beauty of the simple narrative itself, and the sublimity of the conceptions embodied and evolved in its course.

Considering the book which I was reading, as one merely of human origin and invention, I could not help regarding it with such admiration, that it appeared to me above all things wonderful, I had never seen it mentioned by any of the writers of the age, or heard it spoken of by any of those, who, in my presence, since I came to Rome, had talked concerning the faith and doctrines of the persecuted Christians. —But this was not all—at least, said I to myself, there is something here which deserves to be inquired into and examined. Of things, such as these, if told falsely, it must needs have been—nay, it must still be easy to prove the falsehood. It is impossible, that, in the days of Tiberius, any such events should have occurred in Palestine, without being more or less submitted to the inspection of Roman eyes. This is no wild tale, handed down from the dark

ages of a barbarous race. Here I have a Roman centurion,* described as being among the witnesses of this man's miraculous power, and as acknowledging his belief in the divinity of his benevolence. Here, at least, must have been one spectator without prejudices, otherwise than against the potency of this Prophet of Nazareth. Of a surety, the legends of Rome herself contain many tales which demand a much greater measure of indulgence; since the wonders they narrate, appear to have been oftentimes attended with no beneficial consequences, either to individuals or to the state; whereas here the occasion appears always to have been such as might justify the interference of supernatural might. The power of this person seems to have been exerted only for good; and his precepts are full of such godlike loftiness, as neither

* St Luke, chap. vii. ver. 1.

Socrates, nor Plato, nor any of those Greek sages, who bowed in reverence to the hoary wisdom of Egypt and India, would have disdained to admire.

Such, I think, were some of the thoughts that followed each other in my mind, while I was reading the first part of this Sacred Volume. The doubts, suspicions, and distrusts, with which they were mingled,—the under current of reluctance with which I felt myself all along contending,—were such as you may more easily imagine than I can describe.

As the narrative went on, however, you will have no difficulty in supposing that my attention became more and more closely rivetted, and that, occupied with the strange events and sublime scenes it unfolds—and agitated by turns with the pity, the wonder, the terror, and the admiration that matchless story must ever awaken, either in believing or hesitating minds,—I had forgotten, for the time, every thing

beyond the page of the volume on which my finger was fixed. I had read so till the oil of my lamp was well nigh exhausted, and my eyes already began to feel strained, by reason of the feebleness and uncertainty of its light. Nevertheless, so thoroughly was I still occupied, that the door of my chamber was opened without my perceiving it. It was only the rustling of Dromo's cloak against the edge of my chair, that made me aware my privacy was disturbed ; and I turned round to the Cretan with a start as sudden as that of one roused by a rude hand from the strong slumber of midnight.

The face of the man was greatly flushed, and he seemed to be much out of breath ; but, in spite of these symptoms of recent fatigue, I soon perceived that he had not come thither with any thought or purpose of repose. On the contrary, his hands seemed to be busied in tightening his girdle, even before he was able to speak, and the first words he uttered, were—" Come

along—come along, sir—this is no time for study. We must be quick, indeed, if we mean to do any service to-night. I have acquaintance with some of the soldiers at the Capene Gate, and they will let us pass through, but they are relieved at the next watch, and then we shall have no chance.”

“ And why,” said I, hastily thrusting the scroll into my bosom—“ why, Dromo, or for what purpose should we desire to pass through the Capene Gate at the dead hour of night ?”

“ Come along,” said he ; “ in brief, there is no time for explanation. It is simply because it is the dead hour of night that we must pass through the gate ; for it would do nobody any good to pass through at any other time. Heaven knows, and so do my weary limbs, that I have been through it more than once already since the moon rose ; but this is no occasion either for explanation or complaint. Come along—in a word, —for the sake of all that is holy,—or abandon Sextus to his fate.”

Thus adjured, I could not oppose any obstacle to the zeal of this active Cretan. So, wrapping myself from head to foot in my mantle, I glided down the stair-case behind him, and stole, with quick but cautious steps, through the hall. The chained porter was lying asleep on a bundle of skins across the threshold ; but Dromo had already found means to have the door opened, so he leaped lightly over the man, and I imitated his agility. The Cretan then locked the gate on the outside, by means of a key which he carried in his bosom, and in a twinkling began to move onwards at a pace, not much inferior, I think, to that of a well trotting poney. The refreshing current of the stirred air excited me as much as the infection of his eagerness ; so I also moved rapidly, and without asking any farther question ; satisfied, in short, to follow, like a well-trained soldier, the guidance of the leader to whose command I had submitted myself.

Nor could I easily have found a better. But instead of conducting me, as I expected, along some of the wide and stately windings of the great streets I had already traversed, this cunning varlet, (who seemed, indeed, to move as if he had a natural aversion to every open place,) threaded one obscure lane after another, keeping always, where the moonlight had any access, to the dark side of the way ; insomuch, that a person better skilled than myself, might well have been somewhat puzzled ; and as for me, I had not the least conception whither I was going. Close, however, did I adhere to him ; and, in truth, it was no wonder if I suffered less than he did from the race ; for Dromo was both much older, and though but a little fellow, much heavier than me, and besides, according to his own account of the matter, this was not the first race he had encountered that night. Howbeit, we both continued to go on, without much slackening the pace at which we had com-

menced, and reached the Capene Port, which, as you know, is on the south side of the city, not many bow-shots from the Anio, before I could have imagined it possible to traverse so great a space. I comprehended well enough, from certain gestures exhibited at crossings and turnings, that the obscure path of the Cretan had been partly selected for the purpose of avoiding any interviews with the watchers of the night ; but I have no doubt its shortness also had, on the whole, recommended it. At least, I am sure I must have taken double the time to perform the journey, had I either followed the line of the Sacred Way, or gone by the river side, on the west of the Aventine.

Before coming close up to the gate, Dromo told me to wait for him a single moment, and stepped down into a low cellar, in which a light was burning ; but he staid not long there, and when he returned to me, I observed that his style of walking was a good deal more clumsy than usual, which, indeed, was not much to be wonder-

ed at, considering that he had now to carry, not only himself, but two huge skins of wine, intended, as I at once suspected, for the purpose of facilitating our passage through the gate of the city at that very questionable hour. I told him my suspicion in a whisper; but he made no answer, except by handing to me one of his burdens, which I should have thought it very unfair to refuse. So laden, therefore, we crept on as well as we could to the portal, beneath the shadow of which two lusty and well sinewed Prætorians were pacing to and fro very majestically, their armour as they moved ringing audibly upon them amidst the silence of the night.

Of that silence, however, my Cretan seemed to have much more reverence than could be expected from shields or cuirasses. Slowly did he make his approach to one of those moving statues, and with gestures of respect did he place his jolly burden at his feet. The Prætorian halted in silence, on observing this method of salutation. In

silence did he stoop and lift it, and with as little noise as was possible did he apply his lips to take cognisance of its contents. The result of that cautious inquiry was, as it appeared, not unsatisfactory ; yet the other skin, which I, imitating in all things the gestures of Dromo, had placed at the foot of the companion Guard, was subjected to a scrutiny equally exact, before the postern was opened to us. Silently did the well-oiled key and bolt and hinges turn, and very silently stooping did we step beneath the lintel of the Capene Gate, which as silently was again made fast, as soon as we had fairly got through it. Immediately on passing, however, we must needs stop for a little moment to draw our breath ; and it was then, that, hearing distinctly through wood and iron these two respectable warriors smacking their lips at the close of every draught, poor Dromo could not refrain from expressing his regret, that, having been so generous to them, he had left nothing at all to himself. But I soon

relieved him from this unpleasant train of reflection, by giving him a few pieces of coin, and desiring him, if he knew any place of equal convenience on that side the gate, to bring forthwith a small cupful for ourselves, that we might enter with the better spirit on whatever should yet remain before us of our journey. A very plentiful cup, you may believe, was very speedily produced, and almost as speedily exhausted ; after which we resumed our progress, though at a rate much more moderate.

And walking thus more leisurely, the Crétan did not now refuse to answer the questions I had put to him before with so little success. On the contrary, whether it was that the wine I had given him opened his heart, or that he had some private objections to moving in silence between the lofty towers and other funereal monuments, that, after you have passed the stream of the Anio, throw their gloomy shadows across all that part of the Appian Way—(for, as to this point, I am not, indeed, prepared to

speaking with any certainty)—the man was now apparently quite as much disposed to be communicative, as hitherto he had been otherwise.

“ A busy day, indeed,” quoth he, “ and a bustling one has this been with me ; and yet I think the worst is still to come of it.”

“ And where,” said I, “ have you been all day, my good Dromo ? for, indeed, both Sextus and I were wondering what could have become of you.”

“ Become of *me* !” he replied ; “ and I assure you, I, on my side, have been wondering more than once what would have become of *him*, had he not happened to have my assistance in this affair, which, between ourselves, is one of the most delicate I was ever any way engaged in. Well, had I been working as hard for the Lady Rubellia, as I have been against her—and had I succeeded on that side of the affair, as I yet have good hope I shall on this—I say nothing, but I don’t think from all I can hear of the widow, I should have had

to complain of the want of some very handsome recompence. But that is not what I am thinking about. I am for Sextus, and all I do is for the sake of Sextus—I should scorn to lend my aid to a lady to assist her in getting a husband that does not like her. I say, I should scorn to do such a thing as that, although I were to have one of Rubellia's own diamond bracelets for my pains."

"Dear Dromo," I made answer, "I have not the smallest doubt of your fidelity, nor yet of your disinterestedness; but I trust, if every thing goes well, you will find all your exertions shall not have been in vain, even as regarding your own interest. If things turn out as we could wish with Sextus, do not entertain the smallest doubt he will take care to reward you to the utmost of your expectation."

"My expectation!" quoth he; "I promise you that is no great affair. Be so good as to look over the wall there, for I, for my

part, have looked already, and tell me what you see."

"I see," said I, leaning over the parapet, — "I see nothing but a dog gnawing a bone by the side of a bush here."

"Well," replied Dromo; "and is not that robbing the bush? Is not that a very wicked robbery?"

"Robbing the bush, Dromo! what is your meaning?" said I.

"Why, don't you perceive," was his answer, "that if that poor slave's carcase had been allowed to lie where his master left it, it would have fattened the bush? and don't you think it a very brutal robbery of which the vultures and the dogs have been guilty, in robbing the poor bush of what that kind and grateful master intended for it? There is no law in Rome, if such things go unpunished."

So saying, he lifted a large stone from the way, and leaning over the wall beside me, smote the ravenous animal fiercely upon the loins, as it was stooping there,

gnarling and gnawing. The dog on this set up a piteous noise, and run away yelping among the long grass. But Dromo laughed when he perceived that his aim had been successful, and pursued the creature with an angry hiss ; saying, “ Take that, you base cur, and I wish only it had been given to him whose cruel conduct allowed you to taste such a banquet ;” then turning to me with a more quiet voice, he proceeded—“ They say, in the old time the Esquiline itself used to be full of such horrible sights as these ; but it was given to some great man by one of the Cæsars,* and now there is not such a pretty place, no, not about all the city. But when the dogs and the vultures were driven from the Esquiline, they came to this quarter, where the wretches they feed on have, at least, the consolation of being devoured in

* Augustus gave the Esquiline to Mecænas, that the poor might cease to make use of it in their funeral rites. He then covered it with those famous Gardens to which Horace frequently alludes.

the neighbourhood of many a noble funeral pile.—But I tell you,” added he, in a lower note—“ I tell you, Master Valerius, I fancy some other sorts of animals were obliged to leave the Esquiline about that time, of whom I am more afraid than I am either of beasts or of birds—Behold, sir, we must turn off here ; a little to the left is the place we must go to.”

“ I follow you,” said I, “ good Dromo, like a most exemplary spaniel—you leave me never an inch behind you.”

“ Come,” said he again, “ let us move cheerily along. Here, look ye, is the cemetery of a truly noble Roman, for I saw the embers of a recent fire over against its entrance a few hours ago, and they told me he had been burning one of his poor people, and I saw the little urn in which the ashes were to be placed. Well, if you great men knew the truth of the matter, a master never seems so respectable—I mean to say his sarcophagus never does—as when the walls around him are filled

with comfortable little niches, and every little niche contains the ashes of one or more of the faithful servants of the family. A nobleman's urn never looks like itself when it stands gaping in the midst of an empty mausoleum."

I could scarcely help smiling at the particular zeal with which Dromo appeared to have studied this subject in all its bearings, but neither, I must freely confess it, could I avoid sympathizing, in some measure, with most of the feelings he expressed. I rated him, however, very roundly, for entertaining any suspicions of the kindliness of young Sextus, and compelled him to acknowledge besides, that no person in Rome took better care of his slaves, living and dead, than Licinius. But all this availed me nothing, for Dromo had many strange whims in his head; and I found it was quite in vain to introduce any subject in that region of tombs, other than that of the unworthy treatment to which defunct bondsmen are too often exposed by their

masters. I extracted from him, however, a fact of which I had no previous conception, namely, that the corpses, not of slaves only, but of poor freemen, are frequently left in that proud and heartless region, to whiten the polluted ground with as many of their bones, as the fierce dogs that prowl about the skirts of the imperial city, and foul birds, lured from the mountains by the scent of corruption, may chuse to spare.

At length, however, Dromo became quite silent, and walked—not before but beside me—through a bleaker part of the field. As we advanced, he stood still every now and then for a moment, as if to listen ; but whatever he might have heard, or expected to hear, I perceived nothing, except here and there the howl of a dog, or the lazy hooting of the night-owl, from the top of some of the old cypresses that rose between us and the moon. The scene, however, to confess the truth, was sufficiently dreary without any more accompaniments than these. For though the moon was high in

heaven, there was much wind in the air ; and a thousand grey clouds, that seemed to be travelling at full speed between the Alps and the Appenine, followed each other over the face of the bright planet, and dimmed ever and anon the lustre of its beauty. And the wind whistled when the moon was obscured, and sighed very piteously ; and then when the cloud passed away, and the clear moon shone out again, there was such a screeching among the owls, that I could not help thinking the moon was glad to hurry away into the bosom of the grey drifting clouds—so abominable was the salutation of those obscene fowls of night.

At last Dromo seemed to catch the sound he had been expecting, for he started suddenly ; and then laying his finger on his lip, moved forwards with long cautious steps to the parapet along which we were walking.

CHAPTER V.

I CREPT down to the low wall at his bidding, and, looking over it, perceived that the ground sunk very deeply on the other side; but just at that moment the moon passed behind a thick veil of clouds, so that I could not distinctly see any thing below. It seemed, however, as if the eyes of the Cretan were better than mine, for as he knelt by my side, he seized my wrist with an eager and tremulous gripe, and continued to gaze downwards into the hollow, with an earnestness the cause of which I could by no means understand.

At length the cloud rolled away, and

the moonbeams falling brightly on the surface beneath, discovered to my view what it was that had so effectually rivetted the eyes of the slave.

The ground there was more desolate of aspect than any part of that which we had traversed—stoney and hard, with here and there tufts of withered fern, and a few straggling bushes of thorn, growing out of the ungenial soil. And immediately below the wall over which we were leaning two human figures were visible;—wild, uncouth figures, even more desolate than the place in which they appeared. The one of them was sitting on the ground, wrapped in a dark cloak, which entirely concealed the countenance, and even the sex of the wearer. The other was a half naked boy, holding in a string a little new shorn lamb, which with one of his hands he continually stroked and caressed; but his eyes seemed to be fixed stedfastly upon the sitting figure, as if waiting for some signal or command.

Nor was it long before that sitting figure arose, and throwing away the cloak, displayed the grey tangled tresses of an old woman, and two strong boney arms, one of which was stretched forth with an impatient gesture towards the stripling, while the other was pointed upwards to the visible moon.

“Strike,” said she, “silly boy—now strike, and strike deeply, and beware lest any of the blood tinge your feet or your hands!”

Low and dismal was the note in which these words were uttered; but I heard them as distinctly as if they had been thundered, and I recognized at once the voice of the same old woman that had attracted my notice in the morning, at the foot of the Palatine.

The boy, hearing the words of Pona, drew forth instantly a knife from his bosom, whose glittering blade was forthwith buried at one blow in the throat of the yearling, and it was then first that I per-

ceived a small ditch dug between the boy and the woman, into which, the lamb's throat being held over it, the blood of the innocent creature was made to drop from the fatal wound it had received. So surely had the blow been given, that not one faint bleat escaped from the slaughtered animal, and so deeply, that the blood flowed in a strong stream, dashing audibly upon the bottom of the receiving trench. And while it was yet dropping so, the old woman muttering to herself a sort of chaunt, of which I could understand nothing, showered from her girdle or lap, into the trench, I know not what of bones, or short sticks, mingled with leaves and roots, which afterwards she seemed to be stirring about in the blood, with one of the tall strong stems of the fern that grew there ; and then flinging the bloody fern-stem itself into the ditch, she raised her chaunt higher, and I heard words such as these, wild and broken, like the note in which they were sung—

" Bleeds not here in place forlorn,
 The spotless yearling newly shorn?
 Lies not here within the trench,
 Moisten'd with the yearling's gore,
 Brittle bone
 Of hoary crone,
 With the strong bone of lusty wench,
 Crumbling, crumbling ever more?
 Queen of Heaven, from out thy cloud,
 Look while the owl is hooting loud,
 That wandering ghost and shivering sprite,
 May fear to mock my charm to-night.

" Now the bird that sings for thee,
 Sings from the topmost cypress tree ;
 Drearly now the screech-owl hoots,
 Well she knows that we have torn
 The blessed hemlock by the roots.
 Hark her cry ;
 The dark leaves lie
 In the blood of the new-shorn.—
 Bone, and root, and yearling's blood,
 Curdle round the wounded sod :—
 Look, Hecate, while the night-bird screams,
 Wake for us the world of dreams."

And whether it were from the hideous
 croaking of the voice in which these strange
 words were sung, or from the squalidness
 of the scene and the persons before me, or

from some infection of the terror with which Dromo was sensibly inspired by what he saw and heard, this indeed I know not ;— but it is certain that I did not hear out this haggard creature's chaunt without some feelings, I shall not say of fear, yet, without question, of a very displeasing nature. The wildness of the gestures of the old woman was such, that I could not doubt she had herself some faith in the efficacy of the foul and cruel charms to which she had resorted ; nor could I see her stirring that trench of innocent blood, without remembering, with an instinctive horror, the still more ruthless charms, whose practice the poets of Italy have ascribed to such hoary enchantresses. The dreariness of the midnight wind, too, as it whistled along the bare and sterile soil around us, and the perpetual variations in the light, by reason of the careering of those innumerable clouds, and the remembrance of the funereal purposes, for which, as it seemed, all this region

was set apart—The whole of this together produced, I know not how, a certain pressure upon my spirits, and I confess to you, I felt, as I was kneeling there by the side of the Cretan, as if I owed him no great thanks for having brought me that night beyond the Capene Gate. Here, however, I was, and there was no escaping without seeing the thing out. I therefore nerved myself as well as I could, and, returning the pressure of Dromo's hand, continued to keep my eye fixed upon the mysterious group below me.

It seemed as if the goddess, to whom the witch's song had been addressed, did not listen to it with any very favourable ear; for the outward sign at least, for which it had petitioned, was so far from being granted, that, in the conclusion of the chaunt, the clouds gathered themselves over the face of the planet more thickly than ever, while, instead of any atoning gifts of revelation, the wind howled only more

loudly than before among the tombs and the grass, and the half-scared owl sent up a feebler and more uncertain hooting from her melancholy roost. In spite of all this, notwithstanding, the old woman continued, so far as we could see, in the same attitude of expectation with which she had concluded her song, and the poor stripling, her attendant, still held the well nigh drained throat of his murdered lamb above the abominable trench. By degrees, however, the patience of both seemed to be exhausted ; for there arose between them an angry altercation, which shewed that each was willing to throw upon the other the failure of the common incantation.

“ Infernal brat of Hades !” quoth the witch, “ look ye, if you have not stained your filthy hands, and if the thirsty shadows be not incensed, because you have deprived them of some of the sweet blood which they love !”

“ Curse not me, mother,” replied the boy—“ but curse yourself, if you will ; for

any body might have known that the beautiful moon would rather never shine any more, than shine upon such a wicked woman as you. Did you think, in truth, that the blood of a stolen lamb would ever propitiate Hecate? I am but a boy, and yet I told you better."

"Imp of Alecto!" quoth she—" execrable spawn of all the furies! Hold thy peace, foul thing, or I will try whether no other blood may make the charm work better!"

"Beware, beware!" quoth the boy, leaping backwards—"beware what you do! Remember, I am no longer so weak that I must bear all your blows."

And, as he said so, there was just a gleam of light enough to shew me, that he brandished above his head the bloody knife with which he had slaughtered the victim at the witch's bidding.

"A curse now upon thee!" continued the witch, stamping her foot furiously, without, however, over-stepping the trench that separated them—"A foul curse upon thee!"

and a foul curse, since I am bid to say so, upon the womb that bare thee!—And I would curse the loins that begat thee also; but that were needless, for the sea is deep, and the strong hounds of Father Ocean will keep what they have fanged.”

“Ha, ha! mad mother,” quoth the boy, (and I know not whether I ever heard any sound so hideous as that laugh of his,) “Say you so, mad mother of mine? and so also will the strong hounds of old mother earth.”

And at that moment the moon shone out again once more from among the lurid clouds, and I saw that two of those lean dogs, such as I had observed before in that region, had come close up to the woman, and were already beginning to lap the blood from out of the trench before her eyes. And then it seemed as if all the wrath she had before manifested, were but as nothing; for instead of doing any thing to scare them from their feast, she sate down beside them, and wrapping her long cloak once more around her, began to curse, in her madness,

the very power to which her prayers had been addressed ; and the low steady tone in which she now poured forth her imprecations, appeared to me a thousand times more fearful than the previous loudness of her angry screaming.

“ Ay,” said she, “ look forth now from thy cloud,—look forth now, beautiful moon, and listen, if thou hast hearing as well as light, to the foul tongues that are lapping the blood of thy sacrifice ! So be it with all the blood that is ever henceforth shed for thee ! So fare it with all that ever put trust in thee, false, accursed Hecate ; for though thou ridest high in the blue heaven, yet hell is thy birth-place, and hell holds no dæmon falser than thee, beautiful, accursed, execrable Moon ! A curse upon thy false smiling face ! May the steam of the hot blood they are drinking, arise up and blot thee out for ever from the face of the sky ! Set quickly in darkness, false harlot Moon, and console thee in Tartarus, with the ghost of thine Endymion ! ”

And she also concluded her cursing with laughter as full of scorn and rage, as that of her boy had been of savage triumph and delight. And then she arose again from the ground, and stooping over the trench, began to caress with her hands the lean dogs that had by this time well nigh lapped up all the blood.

“Ha, ha! pretty pets of mine,” quoth she, in a fondling tone, “would it not have been very hard to deprive you of your feast! Bones enow, I warrant me, have ye picked already, since the Sun, whose light ye hate, went down, and the Moon, that is so dear to us all, began to shine among the tombs of these proud Romans; and why should ye not have wine, and the strongest and richest of wine too, to wash down your banquet withal? Drink on, pretty creatures, and quaff deeply, and then ye shall have sweet slumbers in some lordly cemetery, which it were foul shame to leave for the habitation of the dead alone. Sweet slumbers shall ye have, in spite of all the

haughty Manes that may shudder at your presence ; and ye shall rub your crimsoned chops upon the finest urn of them all, and the brightest of their eternal lamps shall keep watch over your heavy slumbers.— Drink on, sweet lips, and drink deeply, and leave not a single drop behind you ; and be sure you salute yon high-sailing, chaste, proud Dian, with a thankful howl, ere you creep to your resting-place.” So saying, she turned once more to the boy, who stood shivering over against her. And “ what ? ” quoth she, (again resuming her angry note) “ what is this, foul pest ? and why is it that thou darest to stand by there with that idiot face of thine, while I am cherishing my darlings ? Have at him, pretty dogs, have at him !—Tear him life and limb, and see whether his blood be not the sweeter of the two.”

And then with hissing and grinding of her teeth, and furious clapping of her boney hands, she strove, as it seemed to the uttermost, to excite the obscene creatures against

the boy ; and they, crouching with their bellies on the ground, and wagging their tails, began in truth to howl upon him terribly, while he, knife in hand, seemed to fear and to prepare him for their onset.

But when one of them did crouch nearer, and appeared to be really on the point of springing upon the lad, I could no longer refrain from calling out ; and “ Stop,” said I, “ cruel woman, for there are eyes that you think not of, to take note of your wickedness. Stop, and call off your bloody dogs, and stand upon your guard, boy, and be of good courage.” And, at the same time, I hurled down one of the great loose stones that were on the top of the wall, which rolled on and bounded into the ditch beside them ; and the dogs, hearing the sound of the stone, immediately crept away yelping, and the old woman, huddling her clòak over her head, began to run swiftly away from us, along the wall over which we were leaning. The boy only stood still for a moment, and looked upwards towards the

place where we were, and then he also fled along the shade of the wall, but in the opposite direction from that in which Pona was running.

And Dromo, whose teeth were chattering in his head, said to me, in a very piteous whisper, but not till all of them were quite out of sight,—“Heaven and earth preserve us! was ever such madness as yours, to scare the witch from the place of her incantation, and to hurl a stone into the consecrated trench? Alas! for you and for me, sir—and, most of all, alas for Sextus—for I fear me after this we shall have no luck in counteracting the designs of Rubellia.”

“Rubellia!” was my answer—“what? can you possibly imagine Rubellia to have any thing to do with this madness?”

“Imagine?” quoth he; “in good sooth, I like to hear you talking about imaginations, after what we have witnessed. Do you need to be told, that if things had gone well with that bloody woman and her foul

ditch, we should never have been able to preserve Sextus from her clutches?"

"By the rod of Hermes, good Dromo!" said I, "this will never do. I shall believe much on your credit, but not things quite so extravagant as this."

To which Dromo made no reply, save a long, incredulous, and, I think, contemptuous whistle, which seemed to reach the ears of every owl between us and the Appian Way; with such a hooting and screeching did they echo its note from every funereal tower and tall cypress around us. And Dromo, when he heard that doleful concert, seemed to have all his dread redoubled within him, for he shook from head to foot in the uncertain moonlight, and I thought I could almost hear his heart knocking against his ribs, while I held his arm in mine; until, at last, he seemed to make one violent effort, and springing on his feet, said—"Come, Master Valerius, let us behave after all like men," (I smiled when he said so,)—"let us behave like men, and

quit us bravely ! The hour has not yet come, if my Calabrian friend is to be trusted, at which the lady was to visit Pona in her dwelling. It is but daring a little more. If she has seen and known us already, then nothing can endanger us farther ; and if she hath not, we may escape again as well as this once."

" Well spoken," said I, " most shrewd Dromo, and like yourself ; but what is it that you would have us to do ?"

" The first thing," he replied, " is what has already been too long delayed."

And in so saying, the Cretan produced from under his cloak a long fictitious beard, which he immediately proceeded to fix upon his own face with a string. A thin tall cap of black cloth was next brought forth, which he fastened in like manner around his brows, and a little piece of chalk, with which he once or twice rubbed over his black bushy eye-brows, completed a disguise, beneath which I should certainly have sought in vain to discover any trace

of the natural countenance of Dromo. In short, after a few changes in the folding of his cloak, there stood before me a figure so venerably mysterious, that had I met it there unawares at midnight, and in the neighbourhood of so many tombs, I am sure, although of no superstitious temper; I could not have regarded it without very considerable awe and apprehension.

“Come now, good Master,” quoth he, “you are taller than I, pluck me a branch from the nearest tree, and I think you shall confess I make a very tolerable Sooth-sayer.”

In this it was easy to gratify him; for there was an old willow just a few yards off, and its boughs were so dry with age, that I soon abstracted a very proper wand for him. After receiving which, he stood for a moment leaning on it, in a very dignified fashion, as if to rehearse an attitude worthy of his new vocation; and then said—“Well, sir, I think if the Lady Rubellia comes now, we shall be tolerably prepared

for her. But I have no disguise for you ; therefore, the moment you hear a footstep, be sure you wrap your face in your gown, and stand behind me, for so shall you best consult both your own concealment, and the dignity of this Assyrian. There is no other way by which she can come from the Suburra, therefore we might stay very well where we are ; but I think it might be still better to await her coming, where there are either tombs or larger trees to cast a shade over our equipage, in case the moon should take it into her head to be more kind to us than she was to Pona, and perhaps shine out with an unseasonable brightness."

"By all means," said I, "most venerable man—and besides, the wind is rather chilly, therefore I shall be well pleased to have shelter as well as shade."

"You shall have both," quoth he, "and that without any very troublesome journey ; for there is a thick grove of pines only a little way on. I believe there is a very grand tomb in the midst of them, in

case you should prefer to sit under it ; but I, for my part, shall be quite satisfied with the black shadows of the trees themselves. By the bye," he continued, after some little pause—" it is odd enough that it should be so ; but I believe it is the very place where all that race of the Sempronii, to which a certain young damsel belongs, have been burnt and buried ever since Rome was a city. You cannot see their tomb yet ; but that is only from the thickness of the trees, some of which are, I suppose, even older than itself. Now I remember me, it was just there that they set up two winters ago the funeral pile of old Caius—I mean the father of the Lady Athanasia, whom you saw at Capito's villa. They are a very noble race, and although none of the richest now-a-days, there is not a prouder in Rome. I saw the procession at that old man's funeral myself, and I think the images of his ancestors that they carried before him, would have reached half way from hence to the Great Road.

Grim, dusty figures, I trow they were; but I doubt not there had been many a haughty captain among them when they were alive."

CHAPTER VI.

THESE words were spoken as we were moving onwards towards this same grove of pines, and before he had made an end of speaking, we could clearly hear the wind sighing among their branches, and along the dry underground about the roots of their bare trunks. And on coming to them I found that he had said truly there was a tomb in the midst of them, for a very noble, high, circular tower was indeed there, which, to judge from the greyness of its walls, and the luxuriance of the ivy that grew thereon, had the appearance of being at least as ancient as any of the surrounding trees. The only method of access to

the inside of this tower, seemed to be by means of a winding stair, which rose on the exterior from the ground to the summit—a method, by the way, not unusual in Roman sepulchres—and it was on one of the steps of this stair that I seated myself, where, between the shaded wall on the one side, and the pine branches on the other, I was effectually concealed. As for Dromo, I know not whether it was that he coveted not exactly such close proximity to the stones of such an edifice, or that he preferred, altogether for its own sake, a situation of more conspicuousness; but instead of ascending along with me, when I mounted the steps, he took up a position beside one of the largest of the pines that rose out of the ground over against me. The soil, however, where he stood, was somewhat elevated, so that, leaning on his willow-staff, he could still, not less than myself, overlook the path with a very commanding superiority.

I ought rather, indeed, to say, that he could have easily overlooked it, had there been light enough there at that time, for the purpose of looking at or of overlooking any thing ;—but this was very far from being the case ; for though the moon had got rid of her clouds, and the sky, where any of it could be seen, was abundantly brilliant, the natural darkness of that funereal grove was such, that very little difference could be produced in the midst of it, by any variation on the face of any nightly luminary. The grey tower itself alone received some of the moonbeams on one part of its curved surface ; but its contemporary trees participated not in any such illumination,—one solemn shade covering all things beneath the influence of their massy growth ; insomuch, that even the white flowing beard of my pretended sooth-sayer could scarcely be distinguished by me, sitting right over against the place where he had chosen to take his stand.

“ I can scarcely see you, Dromo,” said I ; “ but I think that speck must be your beard, and if so, I beg you would tell me what it is you really have in view by all this preparation ? Do you expect me to stay here on a tomb-stone all night, merely because you wish to have an opportunity of terrifying poor Rubellia by some ghost-like howl or other when she passes you ?—which, by the way, it seems by no means certain she will do at all. Or what is your purpose ?”

“ Hush, hush, hush !” was his answer ; “ ask me no questions, but listen, and hush thrice when you think you hear any footsteps a-coming—for young ears are the keenest. Hush, I say, for all will be of no use if there be any chatting between us.”

“ Well, hush be the word,” said I, somewhat tartly, for I was not quite pleased with all this affectation of mystery. And accordingly silence was kept so strictly, that, in spite of the chillness of the stone

on which I sate, I presently fell into a sort of a dozing slumber.

By degrees, however,—nor considering the hour and the fatigue I had undergone, is it wonderful that it should have been so,—my sleep must have become sufficiently profound, for I did not at first, on waking from it, very well remember either where I was, or for what purpose I had come thither. And, indeed, I have little doubt my slumbers might have continued till day-break, but for the interruption I am now to mention.

And yet it seemed as if even in my sleep I had been prepared for this by some strange anticipation, for although it was a near sound of singing voices that dispelled my slumbers, and made me start from the stone on which I had placed myself, I could not help feeling as if that sound were not altogether new to me;—whether it were that the half-sensible ear had been already ministering indistinctly to the dreaming spirit, or that

some purely fantastic prelude had been vouchsafed to the real music I was destined to hear. I started up suddenly, that much is certain, and listened—with astonishment, yet not altogether with such surprise as might have been expected to attend a transition so hasty from sleep to waking, and from silence to the near neighbourhood of sounds at once so strange and so sweet. With breathless curiosity, nevertheless—with awe,—and not entirely I think without terror, did I listen to the extraordinary melody—which, after the pause of a moment, I became satisfied could proceed from no place other than the interior of that old circular sepulchre,—on one of the steps of the staircase leading to the summit of which, I had permitted myself to be overtaken with that deep slumber.—Strange, as I have said, and yet passing sweet, were the notes that seemed to ascend out of the habitation of the noble dead into the nightly air,—wild, yet solemn, as if breathed from the bosom of a stately repose and a pensive felicity ;

insomuch, that almost I persuaded myself I was hearing the forbidden sounds of another world, and the thought came over me,—yet almost I think at that moment without further disturbing me,—what fearful interpretations the old poets have affixed to such untimely communion, and how the superstition of all antiquity has shrunk from its omen.

My first impulse, after a moment had elapsed, was to call on Dromo, and I did so, at first in a low whisper, and then two or three times more loudly,—but all equally in vain, for no answer was returned to me; and though I strained my eyes in gazing on the place where I had last seen him, yet there I could perceive no trace whatever of any human figure; for the moonlight indeed shewed with more distinctness than before the tall stem of the old pine-tree against which he had been leaning; but no motion, nor the least appearance of whiteness, could either my eyes or my imagination discover there. I might easily, you

will say, have stept across the road, and entirely satisfied myself; but I know not well what it was that nailed me to the place where I stood, and prevented me even from once thinking of doing so. The calm sepulchral music, my friends, still continued to stream from the recess of the mausoleum, and painless awe held me there, as if by a charm incontrollable. I gazed upwards, and beheld the moon riding above the black pine tops, in a now serene and cloudless heaven. The wind also had passed away, as it appeared, with the clouds it had agitated. The bird of night was asleep on her unseen bough; and all was silent as death, except only the dwelling of the departed; and a certain indescribable delight was beginning, as I gazed and listened, to be mixed with the perturbation wherewith at first I had been inspired.

And I know not how long I might have stood so, but while I was yet listening to this mysterious music, there was mingled with its expiring cadence the sound of a heavy

footstep on the staircase above me, and looking up, I perceived in the moonlight the figure of a man, clad in a white gown, but having a naked sword stretched forth in his hand, immediately over the place whereon I was standing. I obeyed the first natural impulse, and leaped downwards swiftly on seeing him ; but this availed me nothing, for he also leaped, and almost before my feet had touched the ground, I felt the grasp of his hand upon my shoulder, and that so strongly, that I perceived plainly there was as little possibility of escape as of resistance. I made therefore no further effort, but suffered him to do with me as he pleased ; and he, on his part, said not a single word, but still retaining his hold, pointed with his sword to the same steps from which I had descended, and compelled me to mount them before him, up to the very summit of the round tower.

“ Why is this, sir ?” said I to the man ;
“ and whither do you conduct me ?”

“Peace,” was all his answer; and, in like manner as he had made me climb the exterior, so also he compelled me to begin the descent of a similar flight of steps, which led down from an aperture above, into the interior of the edifice. And although I must confess to you that I obeyed not this silent guidance without considerable fear, yet I strove as well as I could to controul myself. I moved with a step, in which I think not there could be perceived any trembling.

Yet you will admit, that even had I been master at that moment of less firmness, I might have been excusable; for looking down, I perceived that a lamp was burning in the midst of the sepulchral tower far below me, and saw sitting around it a company of at least eight or ten persons, at whose mercy, it was quite visible, I must be placed. Neither, if I might judge from the demeanour of the person that was bringing me into their assembly, did there appear to

be any great room for dependance on them ; for, as to themselves, not one of them looked up towards me as I was stepping down, and being wrapped in their cloaks, I had no means of discovering what manner of persons they were. The way in which I had been treated, however, by one of their number, was a sufficient evidence, either that they conceived themselves to have been injured by my being there, or that they were capable of taking some undue advantage of my helpless condition. The calmness of their attitudes, and the recollection of the sounds that I had heard, inclined me to the former of these suppositions ; and when I perceived that not one of them stirred, even till I had reached the lowmost step of the interior staircase, in this, without question, I already felt myself considerably strengthened.

“ Behold,” said my guide, as I at length touched the marble floor of the mausoleum itself—“ Behold proof, and that living, that

my suspicions were not quite so groundless as you were pleased to imagine. Here is a man whom I found listening, even on the very steps of this tower. It is for you to decide what shall be done with the eaves-dropper."

With this the whole company sprung at once to their feet, and I perceived evidently, from the surprise expressed in their looks and attitudes, that until that moment not one of them had been aware of my approach. I was about to speak, and declare my innocence of any treachery, or even of any knowledge concerning the purpose of their assembly ; but before I could do so, one of them, and I think the oldest of all that were present, having in an instant recovered the tranquillity which my arrival had disturbed, said to me in a voice of the utmost gentleness, " Young man, what has brought thee hither, or who sent thee ? Art thou indeed a spy, and was it thy purpose to betray our assembly ? "

" Sir," said I, " I know nothing of your

assembly, or of its purpose ; I fell asleep by accident on the outside of this tower, and, when I awoke, the music that I heard detained me."

"Examine the stripling," quoth he that had conducted me—"examine his person, and let us see whether there be no traces of suspicion about him."

"His looks belie him," replied the senior, "if you have cause for your suspicion. But if you will have it so, search the young man, that the thing may be made apparent how it really is."

And with that my guide, laying his unsheathed sword upon a table, or altar of black marble, that was in the midst of the place, proceeded very leisurely to search my garments, and finding in my bosom the scroll which I had received from Thraso, he glanced on it for a moment, and then handing it to the senior, said, with something like a laugh, "Now, sirs, doubt ye if ye will"—And so saying, the man resumed

his sword, and leaned its point on the floor, as he stood by me.

“ Before heaven—it is the book of the holy Luke !” said the other ; “ this is indeed suspicious.—How came this scroll into thy hands, young man ? Art thou aware that one of the books of the Christians has been found in thy bosom ?”

“ I know it,” said I ; “ it is one of the books of their faith, and I have read in it this evening for the first time.”

“ Then thou art not thyself a Christian ?”

“ I received the book from one Christian,” said I, waiving the question ; “ and I made promise to deliver it into the hands of another ?”

“ Name the Christian who gave thee this book ?” said my stern guide.

“ Thraso,” I replied ; “ the same who died yesterday in the Amphitheatre.”

“ Yes,” quoth he, again ; “ and I suppose it was there he gave it to you. Every one knows the name of Thraso. Name, if

you please, the person to whom you are to deliver the book."

"You shall pardon me," said I, "that I will not. You may call me an eaves-dropper, if you will; but you shall find I am no traitor. It is a Roman—a noble Roman lady to whom I must give this book; and I would not tell you her name although you should slaughter me here in this tomb, which I have entered living and without guilt." And having said this, I folded my arms, and stood still, abiding their will.

But scarcely had I finished the words, ere I felt a small trembling hand laid upon my shoulder, and looking round, I perceived Athanasia herself, who whispered into my ear,—“Valerius, was the book for me? If so, you may say it boldly, and I will vouch for your word.”

“For you, lady,” I answered in the same tone, “and for none other. You well know that I was present in Thraso’s prison the night before his death; so far at least you can confirm what I have said.”

“ Sir,” said she, then addressing the old man that had before questioned me, “ I know this young man; and I believe what he has said, and will be answerable for his fidelity. It was he that went in to Thraso the other night in his prison, and the book was entrusted to him by the old man, that it might be given into my hands. His name is Valerius—Caius Valerius—and he is by birth a noble Roman.”

“ Say you so, lady ?” interrupted my original conductor; “ then I ask his pardon. I have wronged Caius Valerius; but both you and he must forgive me, for it must be confessed he was found in a very extraordinary situation.”

“ Even so,” I replied, “ I have nothing to complain of. I perceive that I am present in an assembly of Christians; but he shall do me much wrong that thinks I bear any enmity to them,—or, from all that I have yet seen or read, to the faith which they profess. I have read part of that book,” I continued, “ for I made promise to Thraso

that I should do so before giving it to Athanasia ; and I trust I shall still be permitted by her to read more of it before it is finally demanded from me."

" Oh, read it !" said Athanasia, gently again whispering to me. " Oh yes, read the book, Valerius, and may God enlighten the reader." And so saying, she herself took up the scroll from the table on which it was lying, and gave it again into my hands.

" There was also a letter for you," said I, receiving it, " but that I have left at home."

" No matter," said Athanasia, " you shall give me the letter and the book both together hereafter."

" In the meantime," said I, " I suppose it were better I should retire."

" Young sir," said the senior, " that is as you please ; we have well nigh made an end of our worship ; but, if it please you, you are at freedom to abide with us till we all go towards the city. Stay, if such be your will ; that which you may hear, can

at least do you no harm. Already, I doubt not, you have seen enough to despise the ignorant calumnies of our enemies."

And when he had said so, the old man walked to the side of the sepulchre, and took out from behind one of the urns that stood there, (ranged in their niches,) a small casket, which, returning, he placed before him on the marble table. Then, opening the casket, he brought forth a silver goblet and a salver, containing some little pieces of bread ; and, untying from his neck a massive cross* of gold, he set that also on the table, between the cup and the salver. In brief, the Christian priest, (for such, as you already see, he was,) had finished his preparation, and was about to commence the administration of the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist. And when all the rest were kneeling around the table, Athanasia, laying her hand upon my arm, beckoned to

* See *St Chrysost. de Adorat. Crucis.* Also *Conc. Nic. 2. Act. 4.*

me to kneel by her side in the circle ; and so, indeed, I would have done in my ignorance, had not the priest himself pointed to a stool a few yards behind the lady, whereon, accordingly, I seated myself—apart from those who were to be privileged with the participation of those holy symbols.

Now scarcely had they composed themselves in their places, and listened to the first words of the appointed service, when I, sitting there by myself, thought, unless my ears deceived me, there must be a pattering of feet on the outer stair-case of the tower ; and deeming that it was so, my eyes instinctively, I suppose, were fixed upon the aperture, which, as I have told you, was in the high roof above the circle of the niched walls around me. Here, however, when I first looked up, there was, indeed, nothing to be seen, but the round spot of the sky, far up in the midst of the marble roof ; but while I was looking steadfastly thereon, it seemed to me as if that space were suddenly very much diminish-

ed ; and thinking so, I could not refrain from starting up, and I know not whether some slight ejaculation might not have escaped from my lips. But so it was, that, at the very moment of my starting up, there was heard distinctly the howling of dogs from the summit of the mausoleum, and immediately afterwards there was a clapping of hands, and a voice, which I well knew could be none other but that of Pona, screamed high above their barking, “ I have them—I have them :—here, here—I hold them—let them burst the net if they can.”

And then the dogs howled more and more furiously, and though her screaming voice was still audible, it was no longer to be discovered what words they were which she was uttering.

These, however, which I have already repeated—and you would think the less of that, could I give you any notion of the tone in which they were uttered—were of themselves quite enough to disturb effec-

tually the Christian priest, and the whole of those that were with him. Rising up hastily from their knees, they stood all together around the table, while the old man, having kissed reverently both the cup and the cross, restored them as quickly as he could to the casket from which they had been taken. But while the priest was doing this, he that had found me on the stair, appearing to revert into his suspicion, and looking sternly upon me where I stood, said, "Is this then the innocence which we spared? Is this the noble Roman for whom Athanasia pledged herself? Speak, brethren, what shall be done to this traitor, by whom, even more than by those dogs of the tombs, it is a shame for us that we have been hunted?"

And saying so, the man lifted up his sword again, and it seemed as if he would have smitten me to the ground without farther question. But Athanasia, when she saw what he was doing, threw herself swiftly between him and me.—

“ For shame, Cotilius,” said she ; “ such suspiciousness is unworthy of a Roman knight.”

“ You say well, noble damsel,” quoth the old priest, interrupting her ; “ but you might say also that such cruelty is unworthy of a soldier of Christ. Peace, peace, children ; there is no evil in the youth, nor, if there were, would it be our part to avenge it.”

While he was saying this, three or four blazing torches were thrust down into the place from above, and Athanasia leaning upon my shoulder, said, “ Look up, look up, dear Caius, I see the helmets of soldiers. — Alas ! ” she added, “ am I not already here ? why, if they will slay me, should they drag me away now from the tomb of my fathers ? ”

And I felt the trembling of her hands, and she leaned with all her weight upon my breast ; and I know not, I will confess to you, whether at that moment I tasted more of pleasure or of pain. Of this at least I am sure, that at the price of any

danger to myself alone, I would gladly have purchased that word of kindness, and that pressure of confidence.

But by this time several of the soldiers had already begun to descend the steps into the tower, and before another minute had elapsed, we found ourselves surrounded by the flame of their torches. And he that seemed to lead the party, after counting us one by one, said, turning to his companions, "Well, an old woman has told the truth for once—here are even more I think than she warned us of.—Come along, worthy people—come along—you must not keep the Tribune waiting for you all night, and our watch is well nigh expired already. Come, come, mount the stair—you know your own qualities, or, if you don't, this is no time for standing upon precedence.—Come along—it will take a good half hour yet, I believe, to lodge you all safely in the Tullian—And do you," he added, laying his hand on the hilt of Cutilius' sword—"do you, my good sir,

allow me to save you the trouble of carrying this bauble."

Nor was the stern knight so foolish as to dispute the command; but having yielded up his sword, he forthwith began to ascend the stair, one or two of the spearmen preceding him with their torches. The old priest followed, and so did all the rest; the last that went up being, I think, Athanasia and myself.

CHAPTER VII.

ON every side around the old tower, when I looked from the summit of it, I perceived foot soldiers drawn up in a double line, while the road along which I had come with Dromo, was occupied by a band of horsemen, one of whom moved forward when he saw us descending, as if to take cognizance of the number and quality of the surprised assembly. His long cloak being muffled about his ears as he sate on horseback, and the shadow of his helmet falling deeply on the upper part of his countenance, I did not at first suspect who it was ; but he had not counted half the party to the Superior Officer behind him,

ere I recognized him from the sound of his voice alone; and who, think ye, should it be but my good friend Sabinus?

I do not think I ever yet saw surprise expressed so strongly as it was on the face of the jolly Centurion, when his eye detected me. He checked his horse so sharply, that the animal bounded into the air as if he had been transfixd with an arrow; and "Valerius!" quoth he, "ha! by the life of Trajan, what is the meaning of this? Valerius in a Christian synagogue! By all the gods, there must be some mistake in this matter." But before I, in my confusion, could make any answer to these exclamations, his eye chanced to glance on Athanasia, who, pale and trembling, still retained the support of my arm; whereupon there was an end at once, as it seemed, of his extreme astonishment; for "ha! ha!" said he, in a quite different tone of voice, "there is a lady in the case, is there?" And then, stooping in his seat, he whispered, half

laughing, into my ear, "My most hypocritical smooth-face, you shall see what is the consequence of bringing these transatlantic pranks of yours to Rome. By Hercules, you wild dog, it may cost you some little trouble to get out of this scrape."

And when he said so, he at once turned his horse, and rejoining the troop, appeared to enter into close conversation with him who sate at the head of the line; and I could see well enough, from the gestures he used, and from the manner in which the other listened to him, that he was making some explanation which appeared by no means satisfactory to the person who heard it. Sabinus raised his voice very much as the colloquy proceeded, but I could catch nothing more than the sound of one or two most violent oaths, while, all the time, the Tribune (for such he was) continued to shake his head, in a way significant at once of doubt and determination. The end of it was, that he pointed with his sword; and Sabinus, having apparently received a com-

mand he durst not dispute, forced his horse backwards, at one plunge, into the place from which he had originally rode forth. And, whether the animal had been infected with something of the rider's passion, I know not ; but it seemed as if, after he had compelled him into his station, it was no very easy matter to keep him there, for he pawed and pranced so violently, that I thought he would have thrown all his neighbours into disorder. The strong hand and knees of the Centurion, however, prevented this, and the chafing Thracian was ruled into calmness.

But in truth I had no leisure for observing any thing further, for some other soldiers coming up, with led horses and mules in their hands, our party were immediately separated one from another, each, as it seemed, being destined to proceed to some peculiar place of safety, under peculiar guidance. I saw the old feeble priest lifted on a mule by one of the soldiers, and then hurried away towards the city, with a

horseman on each hand of him. The fiery Cotilius, and one or two more, were compelled to follow, with similar attendance, in the same direction ; others, again, had their horses heads turned more to the westward, but all departed at great speed, and were soon lost to my view among the projections of the tombs. The last that remained to be disposed of were Athanasia and myself, and for a moment I had some hope that we might perhaps be sent to the same place ; but this hope was in vain, and after I perceived that it was so, scarcely even was time permitted to me for bidding her farewell. To kiss her hand, and to whisper a single word of parting hope into her ear, was all I could do. A tear rolled from her cheek and fell upon my hand ; yet she smiled faintly upon me, and “ Hope,” said she—“ yes, dear Valerius, Hope and Faith both go with me.” And with that the pale maiden was separated from the arm to which she had trusted, and I saw her also mounted and borne away rapidly from be-

fore my eyes, in the midst of a cloud of the horsemen. While I was yet straining my eyes to gaze after her, I found myself, in like manner, seized around the waist by a strong man, and lifted upon a horse, whose bridle one of those that were to guard me held in his hand; and almost before I could look around me, we had escaped from the flare of the torches, and the crowd of the soldiery, and were stretching at a rapid pace, I knew not whither, although I suspected, from the wideness of the road, that we had already regained the Appian, and were proceeding in its course.

But I have forgotten to mention to you, that just at the moment when they were lifting Athanasia upon the mule that was to bear her from my sight, my eye caught a glimpse of the witch Pona, who was sitting at the root of one of the pine-trees, close to the tower. The two dogs, whose barking we had heard before the soldiers broke in upon us, were couched beside her as she sate; and behind her stood, leaning

against the tree, a figure wrapped in a rich red cloak, which I suspected to be a female also, but could not be certain, because the countenance was quite concealed in the folds of the garment. To this person, whoever it might be, the witch turned round eagerly, while the soldiers were carrying off Athanasia ; and I heard again, at the same moment, that low croaking laugh, the remembrance of which has power, even at this distance of time, to make me shudder when I think of it. I saw—I heard no more,—for, as I have told you, immediately afterwards I also was carried away. In the midst of all the confusion, however, both of my own mind, and of the scene around me, that hideous laugh of the old enchantress could not be heard without making an impression upon me ; and I think its note rung in my ear during half of the tempestuous ride which ensued.

I say tempestuous, for our hasty pace had not borne us to any great distance from the place where all these things occurred, ere

the sky, which, as ye have heard, had all that night been sufficiently variable, began to exhibit appearances which they that rode by my side interpreted as significant of the approach of one of those nocturnal storms, to which, at that season of the year, the fair heaven of Italy is peculiarly subject. That they apprehended somewhat of this sort, I perceived from their looks, as they stopped for a moment to draw the hoods of their mantles over their brazen helmets ; for as to words, of these they uttered none, either to me or to each other, until our journey drew near to its close. For me, however, the numberless agitations through which I had passed in the course of the few preceding hours, had, I suppose, communicated an unnatural measure of ardour to my boyish blood ; for neither did I feel the night-breeze chill me, as we rushed through it, nor partook, in any sort, of the desire my companions testified to cover themselves from the rain, which seemed to be about to discharge itself out of all those black and lower-

ing clouds now gathered above our heads from every region of the heavens. When, on the contrary, the first heavy drops fell on my face and hands, it seemed to me as if they were but the foretaste of a cooling delight, and I bared my burning forehead to the grateful moisture, with the eagerness of one who, in a parched and dry place, comes suddenly upon the green margin of a well-spring. Nor did this sensation subside even after the storm had thickened to the utmost, and the dusty roads had drunk abundantly of the plashing rain. The delight grew upon me as I proceeded. The strong wind blew with redoubled coolness upon my moistened neck—the rain-drops dashed big and heavy on my hot hands; and I perceived, that, as is the nature of those animals, the thunder which was mustering in the air, filled my horse one moment with dread, and the next with a blind fierceness. At last the great voice of the thunder shouted over-head, and its echoes spread wide and far on either side, until they seemed to be

absorbed to the left in the remote gulphs of the Appenine, and on the right hand in the measureless bosom of the Western Sea—of which, as we galloped along the hill side, the broad lightning (unless my fancy deceived me) revealed ever and anon a distant and melancholy glimpse.

We had passed a hill covered with towns, villages, and stately mansions, (which I afterwards learned was no other than the famous Alban,) ere the storm subsided beneath the influence of the reddening dawn. Yet even then we slackened not our pace, although the horses were by this time not a little exhausted with the swiftness of their motion, and the weight of their wet riders. On rode we in the growing light of the morning; but I perceived ere long that we had left the wide and magnificent Appian Way, and were pursuing the line of a narrower road, which seemed to carry us more and more westward.

At length we halted for a moment on the brow of a declivity, where three paths

separated ; and I perceived that among my guides there was some little uncertainty as to which of these it behoved them to follow. While they were muttering together, I looked and beheld at length the wide sea heaving far below, over what appeared to me to be a forest as mighty as I had ever seen in my native island.

Old hoary oaks leaned on either hand quite over the narrow path-way, into which (after their brief pause of consultation) my conductors directed our course. Here and there, such a shield had those huge leafy boughs extended over the road, that the dust rose from amongst the feet of our horses as if all that night not one drop of rain had fallen there ; although elsewhere, in the absence of such mighty trees, the water lying across the path in pools testified abundantly that the tempest had not spared the forest any more than the champaign. Vast waving gulphs of bay and ilex, with here and there some solitary pine raising itself proudly in the midst, seemed to stretch

away on either hand between the groves of those gigantic oaks.

The path we followed carried us ever deeper and deeper into the bosom of the woods ; and, at length, so buried were we in the windings of their stifling shade, that I had lost all notion of the direction in which I was moving ; until, after two or three hot hours, weary man and jaded horse were, I believe, equally delighted with snuffing once more the open current of the air. We reached not the edge of the forest, however, before I could hear distinctly the dashing of the Mediterranean waves ; and the last ascent we climbed laid open to my view a long sweep of the rolling waters, and their rocky coast garnished everywhere with the richness of superincumbent woods. Far, very far, in the distant north, I thought I could recognize some of the stately towers of Ostium, bosomed apparently within the billows over which they presided. All between was one wide waste of wood and

rock, save here and there a watch-tower perched on the margin, and whitened half-way up with the foam of the yet uncalmed sea.

Then, nor ever could I look upon the waters of the great deep, without something of that filial yearning which seems so natural to every native of our sea-girt island. But neither could I contrast the condition in which I now approached it, with the strong and light hopes under which I had so lately left it behind me, without many thoughts more sad and serious than as yet had frequently visited my bosom. What a strange brood of visions had passed before my eyes, since, but a few days before, I stepped for the first time, light of heart, beneath the shadow of those far-off bulwarks ! What new emotions had arisen within my breast in the interval ! How had every sense been gratified ! how had every dream of imagination been exceeded ! Yet what a void had been created within—what

a void felt—not, alas, filled !—Alas ! said I to myself at one moment, why is it that I have been subjected to all these novelties ? Had I not done better to have remained, after all, where life flowed ever calmly—where affection hung over me like a protecting buckler, and my soul could sleep in the security of unbroken faith ! But this was only for a moment. The thoughts of Athanasia haunted me more deeply and more firmly. I thought over every word she had spoken—every look of hers rose up in succession to my memory, with all the vividness of a beautiful and a troubled dream. I seemed to feel as if she were yet present beside me the trembling of her pale fingers upon my shoulder—I kissed the hand on which her parting tear had fallen, as if it were yet wet with the dear moisture. When I thought of the perils in which she must now be enveloped—of the pains she must have suffered—must at that moment be suffering,—it was as if I could have burst

bands of iron, like flax, from off my hands. When a glimpse of the darker future opened before me, I shuddered, and, urging my poor horse onwards in the recklessness of total abstraction, I perceived that even my guides pitied the visible agony wherein all my boiling spirit was involved.

We stopped before the gate of one of the watch-towers, which, as I have told you, I had seen scattered along the edge of the sea. But this, when we came up to it, appeared to me a great deal larger than I had expected to find any of them. The narrow way, amongst which we had been riding, brought us close to its gate, on the side towards the land ; but the rock shelving rapidly on the other side, gave it the semblance, at a little distance, of being suspended over the waves.

It was a building of rude, and apparently very antique structure, the under part, where the door was, square—but the upper circular ; as is, for the most part, the old

Roman fashion in such erections. And this, indeed, I doubt not, might have stood there long enough to have shewn a beacon, when some fleet of Syracuse or Carthage darkened the blue sea over against the Lestrigonian bay, renowned in old song, or the snow-white promontory of Gaieta. Now, however, it was easy to see it had been devoted to purposes of a very different order.

One of the soldiers dismounted forthwith, and began to knock rather violently at the door ; but some little time elapsed ere any sound from within responded to the clamour he raised. At last, however, the hard and withered face of the keeper of the tower, made its appearance at a little opening, a short space above the door, and then the helmets of my companions passed, I suppose, for a sufficient warrant, for in a twinkling we heard the bolts creaking, and the old postern was soon set ajar for our in-going. It would be more pro-

per to say, in the first instance, for the out-coming of the keeper above-mentioned, for, I assure you, that person would have thought it a very strange thing for any one to be admitted into the entrance of his old tower, before he had scrutinized him on the outside of it, with his own authoritative and piercing eyes.

And great indeed as were the troubles of my mind at that moment, I swear to you I could scarcely forbear from laughing outright, when this venerable personage did present himself at the threshold of his garrison. Imagine to yourself a tall, thin, skinny man of threescore years, with a face as dry and yellow as ye have seen on the outside of a pye, and hair as white as ever the skill of a confectioner could represent, and legs bearing, it may be, the same sort of proportion to the feet below them, which the shaft of Saturn's scythe usually does to its blade. Clothe the nether part of this absurd figure in a pair of Dacian, or Gaul-

ish breeches, throw a very decent looking, but somewhat threadbare toga over his shoulders, and to finish the outfit, deck his head with a military casque of the true Macedonian cut, that is to say, sitting close and compact above the ears, and topped with a bristling plume of horse hair, the ends of which fell down on his shoulders, as thickly as if they alone had been intended to turn the edge of a sword in the assault.

He stood with an air of great dignity beneath his lintel, and listened with the most profound gravity to the message which one of my Prætorians whispered into his ear. On its conclusion, he shrugged his shoulders, and regarding me (who by this time had also dismounted) with a glance made up, I think, in pretty equal proportions, of surprise, contempt, and curiosity, signified by the motion of his hand, that we might all three enter. He whistled at the same moment, and there came forth a very young and comely damsel, who, with many blushes

and smiles, took possession of the reins of our horses.

“Stand there,” quoth he, “stand there, little Cestia, and see if there be never a handful of corn to be got for the prince’s cattle,—stand there, and we shall be with you again anon.” And then he also whispered something into the maiden’s ear, and I saw her looking at me from under her eye-lids with an expression of very uncommon curiosity. Two or three curly-pated urchins, of different sizes, joined her at the same moment, and to them, in her turn, the maiden whispered; whereupon the eldest of the children, retreating behind her, eyed me earnestly along the skirt of her tunic, while the younger ones continued to gaze where they were, with looks of open stupidity and wonder. Of all this I could make nothing at the moment, but when we had got fairly into the inside of the tower, I heard the children whispering distinctly enough to each other, “A Christian! A Christian! A Jew! A Jew!” and

then I was at no loss to comprehend the secret cause of all the astonishment I had observed.

The lower part of the tower, into which I had now been conducted, seemed to form nothing more than one huge, bare, and quadrangular apartment, serving, I supposed (and rightly) at once as hall and vestibule to the upper chambers contained within the walls. A small flight of steps, in one of the corners, seemed to afford the only means of access to what was above; but from the position of a door immediately below these, I suspected a part of the prison must be placed under ground. Close beside this door there stood, upon a very rude pedestal, a still more rude bust, either of Jupiter, of Apollo, or of Hercules. The workmanship was such, that I could not be very certain which of the family it was whose features this was intended to represent, nor whether the principal appendage was meant to be a club, a lyre, a bow, or a thunder-bolt; but it did not escape my

observation, that the old keeper crept as close as he could to the sacred stone, as soon as I stepped over the threshold. The guards, who had come with me, did not, however, permit him to remain very long under the shadow of that protecting tutelary; for, saying that it behoved them to return as soon as possible to Rome, they insisted on his extending to them some portion of the same kindness with which, as I have said, he had already desired their horses to be treated by the young woman.

“Come,” said one of them, “old comrade, although you have taken to the gown yourself, you must not quite forget the old Sagum. I’ll be bound such a snug situation as this was not given to one that had never distinguished himself. May I ask, if you have enjoyed it long? or is it only since the present Cæsar’s accession that you have been so fortunate?”

“Forget the old Sagum!” quoth the senior. “By the eye of Mars, I believe I had worn out a score of them, before any

one that now hears me was born. I promise you, I shall never forget the Sagum. Here, boy—here, Anthony—little Anthony—bring out the cheese, and ask your mother for the key, for these gentlemen must drink before they depart.”

One of the little boys that had come out to the door on our arrival, re-entered speedily, hearing this command, and busied himself in setting forth a wooden-board, whereon he placed in great order a huge piece of yellow cheese, and a heap of crisp white cakes of rye. A large jug of water also garnished the mess ; but there seemed to be a little less of diligence, or more of difficulty, about the wine.

“ Fall to, comrades—fall to,” says he of the tower ; “ plain fare is ours—but ye have a hearty welcome for your own sakes, and, under favour, for the sake also of my dear old commander, whose likeness graces the pummels of your swords.—Fall to briskly ; but where is the wine, Anthony ? Don’t

you see we are waiting? Am I not master in this fastness?"

"But my mother has the key," quoth the boy.

"Even so, little spark," replies the senior; "therefore fetch it from her quickly, and tell her, Anthony," added he, in a lower note—"be sure you tell her, there are two gentlemen of the Prætorians here, with a young Christian, who is to be our prisoner."

With that the little boy began to ascend the stairs within the tower, but still in a very leisurely manner. He knocked at a door apparently half way up, and I heard him deliver the whole of his message; for he spake it perhaps rather more loudly than had been intended. But she, to whom it was addressed, seemed to hear it with any thing but that benignity with which poets have ever decorated the transmission of the gifts of Bacchus.

"What, jackanapes?" quoth she, in a

voice loud, boisterous, and all but masculine—"Must he send you to tell his lies for him?—Prætorians and Christians, quotha! Here is a pretty lie got up, sirrah.—But hark ye, youngster, tell this father of yours, who will be the ruin of us all, that though Trajan himself were in the tower, *he* should not have one drop till mid-day, and then not a hair-breadth above the thread that I have tied round the blue goblet. Prætorians indeed! ha! ha! ha!—Get you down stairs, little Anthony, and learn to lie more cunningly the next time."

"Mother, there are certainly three soldiers below. Cestia is holding their horses at the gate; and they have brought a young man with them, who, they say, was caught eating a little child in a tomb last night, and I suppose he must be a Christian."

Some more words passed between them, but the old man made such a clattering on his trencher, and talked at the same time so loudly to the soldiers, that I could not understand the rest of what was said. How-

ever, little Anthony had certainly been gifted with some powers of persuasion, for many minutes did not elapse (although it is true the yellow cheese had time enough to receive many mortal gashes) ere down of a surety came in proper person, the lady of the tower. The sound of her descending step was so heavy on the stair, that before she appeared I was prepared for the entrance of a very portly female ; but her bulk, notwithstanding, astonished me when I did see her. In spite of her enormous dimensions, however, she had evidently been at some period, no doubt a pretty distant one, something of a comely person.—Features, in themselves small and handsome, were seen to no great advantage, cased in an immense supererogatory circumference of cheeks and chin ; and an absurdly tidy foot glanced from under ancles most disproportionably massive. A string of amber beads floated to and fro on the ocean of her bosom. She had fine golden bracelets on her arms too, but they were only half seen, being almost buried

in fat ; and to crown the whole, she wore a flaxen wig, which did not entirely conceal the original dark bristles below.—At the girdle of the amazon hung, on the right side, the much desiderated bunch of keys, being balanced on the left by a dagger and tooth-pick case, almost of equal dimensions.

Her face seemed to be flushed with the promise of a storm when she came in, but the sight of the *thré* horsemen, I suppose, quieted all her suspicions, for she satisfied herself with saying to her husband, “ You stupid old fool, why did you not come up and let me know the gentlemen were here sooner?—and then to send children with your messages, whom nobody can trust to !” A glance of high scorn accompanied these agreeable words ; and then her face assuming an expression of the utmost cordiality, she went up and shook hands with each of the soldiers where they sate ; and “ Welcome,” said she, “ comrades, a hearty welcome to the sight of your helmets.—

By Jove, I thought we should never have any thing more to do in the old tower!—May I be poisoned, if I have heard the jingle of a cuirass in the hall since the first week of Nerva.—Here, boy, take the keys, and bring out the biggest bottle you can see; for the gentlemen shall see what it is to be in the dwelling of an old campaigner—Ha! ha!”

“Ha! ha!” re-echoed the husband, receiving and opening the bottle; “you must know we are both of us old campaigners. You must know my wife is a Spaniard, and has been over half the world with me in her day.”

“I honour a lady that has followed the camp,” quoth one of the soldiers, holding up a large cupful of the wine; “and may this draught choak me, if I honour her the less, either because she is a fine woman, or because she is the countrywoman of Cæsar.”

“That indeed she is,” replied the old man;

“she was born in the same town; and I think they are children of the same”——

“Hold your tongue, fool,” interrupted the lady; “I should like to know why you are able to tell my history better than myself.—Here’s to you all, gentlemen;—and here’s to Trajan the glorious Roman Prince, who is an honour to Rome and to Spain, and to all the world. By Jove,” she continued, slapping the table with her hand, “I remember him when he stood no higher than this board, for I was born and bred up in sweet Italica, and I have him before me as it were but of yesterday, riding on a little white poney that he had, and that upon the banks of the prettiest stream that ever my eyes shall see. Come, fill your cups, gentlemen of the Guard Cæsarian; there shall never a man under my roof drink out of a half-filled goblet to the great Cæsar!”

“Will *you* drink to Cæsar, young man?” quoth one of the soldiers, turning to me; “will you drink honestly to the Emperor,

in case you also have a full cup given you ? and, by the bye, I think you must have almost as much need of it as any of the rest."

I nodded assent to the proposition, and the matron, for the first time, deigning to cast her eyes on me, said,—“ Come, Master Christian, they say you were caught eating a raw child, but may I be so dieted myself, if I believe it ; for I’ve seen a good deal both of peace and of war in my day, and I never yet knew any body that preferred such fare when he had choice of any other. Come along, draw a stool for yourself, and try whether a piece of rye-cake and cheese wont serve you this morning.” And while I was complying with this courteous invitation, I heard her whisper to one of my guards,—“ By Jove, ’tis a proper lad, after all ; is this true that they have told me of him ?” The soldier shook his head in return, and looked very sagacious, but I don’t think he said any thing. “ Ay, ay,” quoth she ; “ prudence in a Prætorian ! this is something new, however. By heavens,”

(sinking once more into her whisper) “ by heavens, I believe the young man has a red edge to his gown. What is his name? who is he?”

The soldier shook his head again, and I heard him whisper,—“ By the life of Cæsar, you know as much about him as any of us. There was a whole cluster taken last night a little way beyond the Capene Gate, and he was one of them; but what they were about, or who he is, I know not, only he is certainly somebody, for I saw our Centurion salute him.”

“ I saw him with Sabinus,” whispered another of the soldiers, leaning across the board,—“ I saw him, I am quite sure of it, along with the Centurion and a gallant company, the last day the Amphitheatre was open; they sate together all the day, and appeared quite familiar.”

“ I pray you, sir,” quoth the lady, raising her voice,—“ I pray you fill your cup, and here I pledge you to our better acquaintance. You shake your head—well. But

what must be, must ; and while you are with us, we may at least be good friends.”

“ Thanks,” said I, complying with her command, and indeed I was sorely athirst ; “ Here, then, is health to all present ;—and fair health to the great Trajan, says no one here more heartily than I, Spaniard or Roman.”

So saying, I drank off the wine, and setting down the goblet, I believe I said, “ Excellent, by Jove,” or something of that sort ; for they all started when they heard what I said, and the old woman called out lustily, “ Fill him another cup to the brim, whether he be Christian or not. The young man at least swears by the gods, and drinks to the prince. May worse never cross our threshold, say I.”

“ The old man,” said one of the soldiers, turning to the hostess,—“ the old man that was killed the other day in the Amphitheatre for his superstition, might have saved his head, even at the last moment, if he would have done as much.”

“ Well, well,” quoth she again ; “ let every one mind his own matters, and I shall mind mine.—Have you brought any money with you, young man ?”

“ Not much,” said I—for to me the question was addressed—“ not very much, I think”—At the same time taking out a purse which, from good luck more than foresight, was, after all, very tolerably supplied.

“ No matter,” quoth the Amazon ; “ no matter whether you have much or little with you. If you have not much, you shall send to my good friend, the Centurion Sabinus, and he will give you more. You shall have the best room in the Tower, however ; and (bating child’s flesh) whether you be Christian or not, by the pillars of Hercules, you shall have the best we can give you. Husband, bring down your book, and let the gentleman enter his name with his own hand. It has been useless for a long time, I trow, but you’ll find it in the old place below your bedstead. Come, stir, old

eyebrow, must you have me do every thing, and disgrace you before our good comrades?"

The ancient did bestir himself, whether merely for the pleasure of obeying his spouse, or from curiosity to discover my name, or from mixed motives, I shall not take upon me to determine. Having drained his cup, however, to the foundation, he certainly rose from table, and limping up the staircase, ere long returned with a musty scroll of parchment, which having unfolded, and blown away the dust from it, he forthwith presented to me. I glanced over the record, and found in it the names of various persons, all apparently entered in their own hand-writing; and most of them, as the woman had already given room to suspect, bearing date in the troublous reign of Domitian. The last name was that of Marcus Protius Lamontanus, who, as it seemed, had been set free from his confinement immediately on the accession of Nerva; so I took it for granted he had been one of the victims of Domitian's

insane oppression, and immediately under his I wrote my own name, with that of my father.

The woman seized the parchment before the writing was dry, and handing it to one of the soldiers, said, "Read aloud, if it please you,—let us hear how the gentleman is called." But the soldier being apparently no great clerk, shuffled the scroll into the hand of his companion, who, equally puzzled, I suppose, handed it back to the lady of the tower. It was then, at last, that she condescended to call her husband into council; and he assuming without question an air of no inconsiderable importance, pronounced forthwith, very distinctly, the name as it was written. But when he came to the name of my father, the old man dropping the scroll, turned to me with a face of infinite surprise, and said, "So preserve me the power of Jove! I believe you must be the son of the same Valerius who was Centurion in the ninth legion during the wars of the great Agricola."

“You have guessed rightly ;—I am the same.”

“Then the more is the pity,” he replied, in a grave voice, and rising from his seat,—“the more is the pity that you should have entered, in such case as this, the dwelling of one that was a true soldier beneath the eagle of your father ;—the more, I say, is the pity, young gentleman. But forgive me if in any thing we have been disrespectful.”

“There is no occasion,” said I, “for any such apology. I am here as a prisoner, and have been treated with all courtesy beyond what a prisoner could expect.”

“By Jove !” interrupted the spouse, “I thought I had some knowledge of the young gentleman’s pretty face from the beginning.—Well, for all that has come and gone, I hope ten years hence he will be as fine a man as his father was the day he slew the Caledonian giant, and tumbled him from his chariot in front of all the line—yes, in sight of Galgacus himself. It was the same

day," said she, turning to her lord, "that you were taken prisoner, and driven away into the woods."

"As witness these marks," quoth the man; and with that he instantly stripped open his tunic, and displayed part of his breast, stamped with various figures of blue and yellow, after the Caledonian fashion, and bearing withal the traces of one or two very formidable wounds. The Prætorians regarded the exhibition with great indifference; but you will believe I could not see without interest scars that had been received beneath the banners of my father.

There was an obvious restraint, after all this, in the behaviour of the whole of the party; for although the huge bottle was well nigh exhausted, they had not got enough to make them feel quite at ease in the presence of one whose rank they had discovered to be such as mine. The woman, on her part, redoubled her kindness; but seeing that I interrupted their merriment, I soon requested her to shew me the place where

I was to be confined.—And, indeed, as you may imagine, I had by this time not a little need of repose.

Both she and her husband accordingly arose to usher me to my prison. I gave money to the soldiers, and requested them to inform Sabinus of the place to which I had been conveyed; but did not choose to write any thing, either to him or to Lici-nius, until I should have had a little time for reflection.

I then followed the ancient pair to the upper part of the tower, where I was lodged in a small chamber, the open window of which afforded a wide prospect of the sea, but with difficulty permitted my eye to take in even a little stripe of the rocky margin. A single low couch was almost the whole of its furniture.

Here, having summoned a tall young clown to keep guard behind the door, they left me to my reflections; but such had been my fatigue, that, in spite of all the anxieties which surrounded me, I ere long

fell fast asleep. The blessed playfulness of nature carried me far from Rome and Italy, back to the green woods of the island where my father had achieved deeds of glory, and my mother had tended my infancy beneath the shadow of her own trees. Of all that I had seen since I left home, Athanasia only glided before me in my slumber; and she (such was the sweet mockery,) appeared smiling, happy, and serene.

Ere I awoke, the calm sea was already purple below me, and the broad sun about to plunge beneath the waters.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUT neither purple sea, nor golden sky, nor all the divine tranquillity of the evening air, could sooth my mind into repose, after I had once awaked to a sense of the situation into which I had been brought—I should say rather of the situation in which Athanasia was placed ; for, in truth, compared with her probable suffering, all I could suffer in my own person appeared to me as nothing.—I was a man. For myself, I could not in seriousness fear any calamity worthy of the name,—if such should come, it must be my business to wrestle with it as I might. But to think of her, young, beautiful, innocent ; and of all to which she might be exposed amidst the rude hands in which I

had left her,—even this of itself, without plunging deeper into the distant future, was more than sufficient to press upon all my spirits with a subduing and irresistible weight.

Yet the admirable regulation of all the details of public procedure, under the then Emperor's administration, on the one hand, and the strong necessary influence of Athanasia's noble family, on the other; these considerations, it is true, recurred from time to time to my harassed recollection, and broke, or at least relaxed, for the instant, the bonds of my anxiety.

The sound of my footsteps, as I paced in my perplexity from one end of the apartment to the other, had, I take it for granted, reached the ears of the people below, for many minutes had not elapsed ere the wife of the old soldier entered, bearing in her hand a goblet of wine, and a supply of fruit and cakes, which would have been more than sufficient for the supper of one as easy and as happy as I was otherwise.

To her first salutation, which was equally cheerful and courteous, I could with difficulty bring myself to make any reply, but she exerted herself so much in arranging every thing for my convenience, that I could not be insensible to the kindness of her meaning, nor suffer her to depart without acknowledging it. But I heard her whisper, after she had left me, to one of her children who had been waiting behind the door—"Poor young man, he is in a sad state; you see what it is, child, to have an evil conscience. He has denied the Gods, and no wonder that they permit evil thoughts to torment him. You remember what the priest told us about those terrible Furies, whom Jupiter lets loose upon mortals, when he is thoroughly provoked with their perversity."

"Mother," replied the child, "you told papa he was a bad man for drinking so much wine every day. I hope Jupiter will not let loose the Furies upon poor papa."

“Hush!” quoth she, “do not speak of such a thing. I hope papa will listen to *me*, and that the reason I speak will be enough. But this is quite another thing, Anthony, for this poor young gentleman is a Christian, and they say believes neither in Jupiter, nor in Mars, nor in sacrifices, nor in auguries; for my part, I tremble when I think of it. But his father was a great and a pious man, and all his kindred are noble; and let us hope he may repent and be prevailed upon to acknowledge the deities, for otherwise the Furies will torment him alive, and who knows what fearful things may be his portion when he is dead. And as for that, they say the Emperor is determined not to permit one of them to live; for there is no saying how far their wickedness might extend itself—Evil is always infectious.”

I heard no more of her conversation with the child, but it was not long ere my attention was attracted by one carried on at

a greater distance below me, in which you will not be surprised that I should have felt myself much more interested, even although the distance was such that I could not distinguish one word that was said. I knew from the first moment that it was impossible I should be mistaken—I was perfectly certain it was Sabinus himself, who was now talking with the old woman ; and I at once suspected that the worthy Centurion, having learned from the soldiers who carried me off, to what place they had conveyed me, had undertaken this speedy journey, for the purpose of comforting me in my confinement. The kindness with which he had treated me from the beginning of our acquaintance had been such, that I could have no occasion to wonder at his exerting himself to discover me ; but I confess this alacrity was more than I had been prepared for, and I waited only for the moment when he should enter my apartment to throw myself upon his

bosom, and entrust all my troubles to him, as to a friend and a brother.

There was something, however, which I could not at all comprehend in the merriment which seemed to be reigning below on his arrival. Loud peals of laughter from the jailor's wife, interrupted the uniform hearty tone of the Centurion's voice; and the feeble treble of the old soldier himself, was stretched ever and anon to the utmost, in a sort of ineffectual attempt at a chuckle. What could be the occasion for so much merriment, at such a moment, I could by no means understand. But the steps of the party were soon distinguishable upon the stair, and I heard enough during the latter part of their ascent, to enlighten me as to the source of the mirth, if not satisfy me of its propriety.

At last in they came, and the Centurion embracing me affectionately, thrust into my hand, without preface, a piece of parchment, which I perceived to be nothing less than an order for my immediate dismissal

from confinement, signed by one of the Roman magistrates. Then taking off his riding-cap, and rubbing with his handkerchief his most audacious and soldier-looking brows, "My dear boy," quoth he, "I see you are going to thank me—but don't wound my modesty by any fine speeches. There was war before Helen—have a better care another time, and don't pay Rome such a poor compliment, as to say that you can find nobody to flirt with but a Christian damsel, and no place for flirtation but a gloomy old tomb, lined from top to toe with urns and lachrymatories. My honest friend here was quite frightened with the idea of having such an unbelieving reprobate as they said you were, under the same roof with her children. But now her fears are dispelled, for good souls are always tolerant to the little vagaries of young blood ; so thank your hostess, my lad, kiss her hand, take one cup to the hearth of the old tower, and tighten your girdle ; for you

must know you have a little bit of a ride before you ere bed-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" quoth the woman; "my Master Sabinus had always such a merry way with him! Well, who should have thought, when the soldiers brought him in with such a show of mystery, that it was all for kissing a young lady by moonlight! ha, ha, ha!—I protest to Jupiter, they would have made me believe he had been caught eating an infant; but I thought from the beginning there must be some mistake in the matter; and I was sure enough it was so, when I found out from whom he derived those pretty blue eyes of his. But still I cannot quite pardon him. Well—well—we must e'en take good hope he will mend ere he die."

"Die?" replied the Centurion; "do you talk of dying to one that has scarcely yet begun to live!—Come, come, Valerius, I hope, after all, you shall never get into a worse scrape."

“ And if I do,” said I, “ I hope I shall always be equally fortunate in my jailors.”

“ By the beard of Jove !” quoth Sabinus, “ it needs no great skill to see that you have been fortunate in that respect. I swear that, if the truth were known, you are almost as unwilling to be taken out of this tower now, as you were last night to be taken away from another.”

“ O, Master Kæso,” quoth she again, “ when will you have done with your joking ? ha, ha !—Well, your father loved a jest in his time himself ; but now he, I suppose, is quiet enough. And how is the old gentleman, and how does he wear ?—Can he still sit in his porch of a fine morning, and listen to the news, as he used to do, with his cup of old Falernian at his knee ?”

“ I trust in all the Gods, good dame,” was his answer—“ I trust the old grasshopper can still chirp when the sun shines. But to tell you the truth, it is long since I have seen him ; and if this young blade has

no objection, I mean to pay him a visit this very night. I am only just come home from Britain, you must know, and have not yet had leisure to salute my Lares since my return. So to horse, my boy, Valerius; old folks go early to bed, and I swear to you I shall be ill pleased, if I don't arrive in time to partake of the sleeping-cup."

I said something about being very anxious to return as soon as possible to Rome; but the Centurion answered me with another shout of laughter, and saying, "Come, come; she's safe enough, I'll warrant her. I suppose you think every one gets out of jail as easily as yourself,"—seized me by the arm, and began to force me towards the stair-case.

In short, I found it was out of the question to disapprove of any of the schemes of Sabinus; so, having saluted the old woman, and flung my purse to her children, (who, by the way, still regarded me with looks of considerable apprehension,) I accompanied my friend with a good grace to

the door of the old tower. I made inquiry before I went forth concerning the old soldier likewise; but I could easily gather from the expression of face with which his wife accompanied her indistinct reply, that he had, long before that time, reached a state in which she felt little desire to exhibit him. The Centurion whistled as he stepped across the threshold, and there forthwith drew near a soldier, wearing the Prætorian helmet, (now sufficiently familiar to my sight,) and leading in his hand three horses. In the rear, I recognised, not without satisfaction, the busy countenance of my friend Dromo, whose ass did not appear quite so eager to join the party as its rider.

A few sturdy thumps, however, at last brought the Cretan close to us, who saluted me with great appearance of joy, and then whispered into my ear, "Great Jove! we must keep silence for the present. What a story I have to tell, when we are alone; and, by Heavens! I suppose there is one to

hear likewise—but all in good season. We must not crack nuts before monkies. I have a letter for you,” he added, “from Sextus, and another from Licinius; but you shall not have them till we are done with our ride.”

The Centurion sprung with great agility on the back of his trusty war-horse, who seemed to rejoice in the feeling of his weight; and we were soon in motion. I asked no questions either about the course we were to pursue, or the distance at which the place of our destination was situated; but rode by his side so silently, that he bestowed on me many good-natured rebukes, for suffering a little affair of love to distress me so greatly.

“Cheer up now, good Valerius,” quoth he, “and do not make me repent of carrying you to my father’s house, by shewing the old man, who has had enough of troubles in his day, such a countenance as must make him think of Orcus, even although he

did not know himself to be near its gates. It is more than a year since I have seen him, and, by Jove! he must not have occasion to reproach me with bringing him a melancholy guest."

This sort of speech he repeated so often, that I at last thought the best way would be to tell him frankly the true history of the adventure, from whose immediate consequences to myself he had so kindly delivered me. I told him, therefore, every thing about both Thraso and Athanasia, and, indeed, kept nothing from him in the whole matter, except only what referred to the impression made on my own mind by what I had read of the Christian book,—for, as to this subject, it was one which I totally despaired of being able to make him in any measure comprehend,—and besides the state of my own mind was still so uncertain in regard to it, and my information so imperfect, that I could not trust myself with speaking of it to any one, until I should have had leisure, for more both of

reading and of reflection. On hearing, however, who Athanasia was, and on perceiving how deeply I was interested in her, the kind Centurion was not only quite satisfied that my melancholy demeanour was not inexcusable, but entering like a true friend into so much as he understood of my troubles, he assumed, as he rode by my side, an air of seriousness and concern, which, in spite of all the kindness I had experienced at his hands, was more than I had expected.

He preserved total silence for some minutes after hearing my story, and then, shaking his head, said, "In truth, my dear Valerius, you have very much distressed me by this communication. I thought it was merely some little idle frolic born of an hour, and to be forgotten in a day; but if things be as you have told me, I cannot refuse you all my sympathy. Would to Heaven I had it in my power to offer you more!"

“ Dear Sabinus,” said I, “ I know not how to thank you. You saw me but a few days ago, the merriest young fellow that ever trode the pavement of Rome—You saw me happy in the moments that passed, and full of glad hopes for all that were to come ; but now I feel myself quite changed in all things. Almost I wish I had never left my British fields ; and yet if I had stayed there, I should never have seen Athanasia.”

“ Poor fellow !” quoth he, laying his hand on the mane of my horse, “ I perceive there is, indeed, no trifling in your case. Yet compose yourself ; for I see the tears are standing in your eyes. Compose yourself and consider, that whatever chances there may be in your favour will never be increased or bettered by despondence.” He paused another minute or two, and proceeded—“ The worst of the whole is this new bitterness of Cæsar against these Christians. Except during Nerva’s time, indeed,

there was always some punishment to be feared by them, in case of being detected ; but there was a way of managing things in almost every case, and people were well enough disposed to grant immunities, which were always attended with some good to the Fisk. Nero and Domitian, to be sure, acted otherwise—but then these were madmen ; and besides they did so only by fits and starts. But now, when a prince like Trajan has really taken up the matter, it is no wonder that one should think of it a good deal more seriously. One cannot help thinking he must have had some good reason before he began—that is one thing ; and having once begun, he is not the man to drop it lightly—that is another and a still more weighty consideration. Do you think there is positively no chance of the poor girl giving up this foolish dream, when she finds what a condition it has exposed her to ?”

“ No,” said I ; “ I am sure she will not,

nor can I wish it should be otherwise with her."

"Well," he resumed, "I enter into your feelings so far, my dear friend, on that point likewise. By Jove! I cannot imagine you to have been so deeply smitten with a girl of a flighty unsteady character. But then this is not a case to be considered or talked upon on common principles. It is no light thing to be exposed to such examinations as are now set afoot for these people; and if she behaves herself so resolutely as you seem to expect, what is the end of it? I consider it highly probable—for there is no friendship in uncandid speaking—I consider it as highly probable, that, in spite of all her friends can do, they will banish her at the very least; scarcely dare I speak of it, but even worse than banishment has heretofore befallen Romans—ay, and Roman ladies too, and quite as high in birth and place as Athanasia."

"My dear Sabinus," said I, "do not ima-

gine that now, for the first time, all these things are suggested to me. Imagine rather, how, thinking of them continually, and unable for a moment to expel them from my mind, I have spent these miserable hours ever since she was taken away from my sight. Her friends too—her relatives, alas! what must not be their alarm and consternation—if, indeed, they know any thing of what has happened—but that, I think, is scarcely to be supposed. Her absence, however, must of itself be sufficient to render them utterly wretched. Her poor friend Sempronia—Alas! what grief must be hers.”

“The thing was done at such an hour, and with so much despatch,” quoth the Centurion, “that I think it is almost impossible it should have made much noise as yet. If there was in the family no suspicion that the young lady had any connection with any of these people, you may depend on it they must be in a state of the most perfect perplexity. How will they account for her absence? They will perceive well

enough that she had gone out in secret during the night. I lay my life they take it for granted she has had some private intrigue, and has gone off with her lover."

"Alas, Sabinus, when they hear the truth, it will be still worse than this in their eyes. Yet it appears fit that no time should be lost in making them acquainted with the real state of the case. Her two uncles, Lucius and Velius, must both be informed of it. And yet how is it that I, who have never seen the one, and have but just been introduced to the other, shall venture upon making such a disclosure to them? Oh, Sabinus, I foresee, that, in all these things, I shall have need of your counsel and your help."

"You shall have them both, my dear boy," said he,—“you shall have them both to the uttermost. But it seems to me that there is no question at all about the propriety of telling the relatives of the lady all you know. Licinius is probably well acquainted with them; and you could not find

any one more proper, or more able for saying whatever is necessary. I am now almost sorry for having prevented your immediate return to the city ; and yet this night will soon be over,—we shall get into Rome early to-morrow, and till then it is probable nothing could have been done at any rate.”

“ But Athanasia herself”——

“ Ah ! that indeed is a point of some difficulty also. It was merely from having remembered who the men were that rode off with you, that I was enabled to learn so soon whither you yourself had been conveyed. But the party consisted of a few men out of almost every one of our cohorts,—those in short that were on duty, scattered up and down in different parts of the city ; and I may not find it very easy to discover who had the care of any other individual.”

“ But Athanasia”——

“ True,” said he, “ I had not thought of it. There was but one female besides herself, I

think, in the whole party. That will furnish a clue. You may rely on it, I shall easily find out the place to which they have taken her ; but then where, and at what distance that may be, Heaven only knows ; for it seemed as if every prisoner were to be carried to a separate place of confinement. It is very likely the girl may be lying in some other watch-tower along the coast here, just as you yourself were. These are generally built in sequestered situations ; and therefore, I think it highly probable the whole assembly may have been dispersed among them. At all events, even if we knew where she is, we could do nothing at present.—Come, cheer up, now you have unburdened yourself of all this load.—Come, now, do cheer up as well as you can, and I promise you I shall be ready to start as early as ever you please in the morning.”

“ I will, I will,” said I ; “ I will do every thing I can to prevent any gloom from being thrown over your meeting with your own family.”

“Family?” said he, “alas! you speak as if there were a whole houseful of them, when in truth there is no one besides my old father and mother, who are now left to recline by themselves at a board which I remember to have seen surrounded with as blithe a group as ever man had pleasure in looking on. Now all are dead save one, and he must live almost always at a distance. Alas! how little for the sake of themselves is it that kind parents rear children. The house that is full of the noise of mirth while they are young, is gradually deserted by them as they grow up, until at length, when there is most need for comfort, no comfort is at hand. As for me, I have no opportunity of doing otherwise than I do.—I make a run from Rome (when I am there,) as often as I am able; but now it is long, as I told you, since I was last with them, and therefore I can scarcely expect to see them now without observing some change.”

“Come,” said I, “you almost make it appear necessary for me to take up the part

of a comforter in my turn. I perceive it is the listening to my story that has saddened you, and now you are looking upon all things with a heavy eye."

"Nay, nay," quoth he, "I shall not permit you to say that of me neither. Behold yon tall pine, that rises over these houses from among all the other trees that are about them,—that is the tree, my dear Valerius, beneath which I sported when I was a child; and nobody shall say that I am sorry to see it again. It grows hard by my father's house, and throws its shade upon the place where the old man has his favourite seat. We shall soon pass through the village, and our house is only a very little way beyond it."

By this time the moon was in her full splendour, and nothing could be more beautiful than the scenery of the native place of Sabinus, as we drew near to its precincts. A little gentle stream, which kissed the path alongst which we were riding, did not de-

sert us as we entered the village, but murmured all through its humble street. Street, indeed, I should not say,—for there were dwelling-houses on the one side only, the other being occupied with nothing but gardens, in the most of which I saw the Doric portico of a small marble temple, whose white pillars were reflected along with the surrounding poplars, upon the quiet surface of the grassy-margined rivulet. In front of the temple a low bridge of one arch crossed the stream, and there we were met by a troop of young maidens, who seemed to be moving toward the sacred place with some purpose of devotion, for they were singing as they went, in alternate measures, a hymn to Venus the Goddess of the shrine ; and in their hands they carried garlands of white roses, as if for some votive celebration. Some of the damsels recognized Sabinus as they passed us, and, without interrupting their chaunt, saluted him kindly with their laughing eyes. We halted our

horses, and saw them proceed all together into the sacred enclosure, which they did, not by means of the bridge, although they were close by it, but by wading hand in hand through the stream below—whose pebbles, as it appeared from the evenness of their motion, dared not to offer any violence to the delicate feet that trod upon them.

“Happy creatures,” said I to the Centurion; “of a surety they think these moonbeams shine on nothing but glad faces like their own. Alas! with what heart does poor Athanasia at this moment contemplate this lovely heaven!”

“Nay, Valerius,” quoth he, “if people were not to be contented with their own share of sorrow, would the world, think ye, be worth living in? I hope Athanasia herself will ere long sing again by the moonlight.—But stop, here is my own old haunt, the abode of our village barber, and now I think of it, perhaps it might be as well that you and Dromo should remain here

for a moment, till I ride on to the house, and let them know you are coming, for the sudden sight of strange faces might alarm the old folks at this hour."

He had scarcely said so, when the tonsor himself, hearing, I suppose, the sound of our horses' feet, ran out with his razor and basin in his hand, to see what might be the matter.

"Ah, Virro, my good Virro," quoth the Centurion, "with joy do I once more behold your face. Well, the girls still sing, and Virro still shaves; so every thing, without question, goes well in the old place."

"The Centurion himself!" replies the barber; "so Venus smile upon me, it is the good Centurion Kæso Sabinus, who I began to think would never come back again.—Here, boy, bring out a cup of the best, for though I see he is bound for home, the Centurion shall not pass my door without wetting his lips. Alight, I pray you

—well, I see you won't do that ; but, at least, you shall kiss the rim of the goblet."

" I will," said he, " I promise you, my good friend, and that in a minute or two ; but I must first salute my father ; and, in the meantime, I leave with you in pledge, good Virro, my excellent friend here, and the most knowing Cretan that ever landed at Brundusium.—Dismount, Valerius, I shall be with you again ere Virro can half smoothen the chin of Dromo, which even this morning shewed no small need of trimming."

" Well, well," said the tonsor, " eagles will have their own way wherever they go. Be speedy, and return to us."

The Centurion in the meantime had set the spur to his charger ; and we, in obedience to his command, submitted ourselves to the guidance of the oily-faced little barber. A stripling was already holding two horses at the door, but another came out

and took care of our animals, and we entered, exchanging courteous salutations, the tonsorial penetralia,

CHAPTER IX.

THEY were occupied by as various and talkative a company, as the imagination of Lucilius ever assembled in such a place. In the middle of the room, which was spacious, though low-roofed, hung a huge shield of brass, with a dozen mouths of flame blazing around the edge of its circumference, close beside which sat a man with a napkin tucked about his neck, the one side of whose visage, still besmeared with a thick coat of lather, testified that the curiosity of Virro had induced him to abandon a yet uncompleted job. The half-trimmed physiognomy, however, displayed

no sign of impatience, and the barber himself seemed not to think any apology necessary, for he resumed his operations with an air of great cheerfulness, saying, "Neighbours all, neighbours all, here is Kæso Sabinus, that is now the Centurion, come once more to gladden the old village with his merry face, and that, I promise you, is prettily tanned since we knew him first."

This piece of news appeared not a little to interest several of those who were sitting under the tonsor's roof.

"Ha!" said one, "the jolly Centurion! Well, has he brought home a wife with him at last? for the talk was, that he had been seen at the Amphitheatre, paying great court to one of the richest ladies in Rome, and one of the prettiest withal."

"A wife?" quoth the barber; "I believe you shall as soon see myself bring home a wife as the Centurion. No, no, your gay centurions and barbers can do very well without wives. But if he is to have one, I shall be happy to hear she is

rich ; for centurions, after all, sometimes carry most of their silver upon their helmets, as we do most of our brass on our basins—Ha ! ha ! what say you, young master, are we simple villagers to believe what is reported ?”

“ Indeed,” said I, “ I never heard of it before.”

“ There now,” quoth he, “ and if you did you would not say so. Well, I like to see a man keep a secret.”

Almost all that were present joined in a cordial roar of laughter when they heard him say this ; but he, nothing daunted, dismissed the person whose beard he had now entirely scraped off, and motioning to Dromo to occupy the abdicated place, proceeded, with the most enviable coolness, to white-wash the bristly Cretan in his turn.

“ The Centurion,” resumes he, “ has been a long while absent. Well, to see how some people get on in the world ! but I wish many others deserved their good luck as well as the Centurion.”

“Yes,” quoth another, “they say he is high in favour with Cæsar, and that he has a very fair chance of being a Tribune at least before he dies. Well, I am glad on’t, for the sake of his old father.”

“And I, for the sake of his mother,” cries an old woman, who was serving some of the company with a cup of wine,—“a blithe heart will hers be when she sees him in all his bravery. It was always a pretty youth, there was never a merrier lad about the village than Kæso Sabinus, no, nor a kinder neither; many is the time and oft he has taken my pitcher off my head, and carried it all the way across the road for me.”

“If it please you, friend,” said another of them, (turning to the old dame,) “is this the same Sabinus that has lately been in Britain?”

“Britain,” quoth the dame; “I never heard that name before—Britain! I know it not—I know not where he hath been,

but they told me it was over the sea, perhaps in Palestine."

"Tut, dame," interrupted the barber, "you think every one goes to Palestine, because your own boy carried a spear with Titus; but you know they ruined the city, and killed all the Jews and Christians, and there is no occasion for sending Centurions thither now."

"Killed all the Jews and Christians, said you?" quoth another. "I think the old dame has the better of you as to that point at least, Virro. By Jove, I don't believe Trajan himself will ever be able to kill them all; their cursed superstition breeds like a rabbit, or spreads like a pestilence. It was but last night that a hundred of them were taken together in one place, eating human flesh."

"Human flesh!" quoth the barber. "Oh, ye gods, why do ye endure such barbarians!"

"Human flesh!" echoed Dromo, spring-

ing from his seat, and I looked at him, and saw that the barber in his horror had made in truth a deep incision upon the cheek of the poor man. The blood, oozing from the cut, had already traced a river of crimson upon the snowy surface of his well-soaped chin. It was this that had deranged the philosophic composure and customary phlegm of my Cretan ; and no wonder ; but the enthusiastic tonsor took no notice of what had occurred.

“ Great Jove,” he proceeded, and he pointed to the roof with his razor as he spake—“ Great Jove ! I adjure thee ! are all thy lightnings spent ; is there never a thunderbolt remaining ?”

“ In the meantime,” quoth one of the byestanders, “ they are in the hand not of Jove, but of Trajan, and he, I think, cannot now be accused of treating these wretches with too much lenity. You have all heard of the death of Thraso.”

“ We have, we have,” cried another ; “ but what was a single individual to this great

assembly? what a sight will it be the day they are all executed !”

“ I think,” said another, (and it was the same person who had inquired whether our Centurion were that very Sabinus that had been absent in Britain,)—“ I think you are over-rating the numbers of that assembly. It is enough as it is, but they have swelled the matter grievously, in bringing the intelligence of it even to this little distance. I heard of no more than a dozen.”

The man who said this was sitting in a corner by himself, as if he had no acquaintance in the room, except indeed a single youth, who I thought, I knew not well why, must needs be his freedman ; but I suppose I had observed some trivial symptom of service, or of more than the mere obeisance of equal courtesy. The stranger, (for such he seemed,) had probably taken that day a considerable journey, for his tunic and boots were covered with thick dust, and the hair on his head had much semblance of disorder. He was attired in the

plainest manner possible, but notwithstanding, there was something about him which gave one the idea of rank superior to that of the company in which he was seated; and his complexion was so exceedingly dark, that I could not help thinking to myself,—“ Well, I am not the only provincial in the room, however; here is certainly some noble African or Asiatic.” Whoever he was, he seemed not to covet observation, for I perceived that he took notice when my eye rested upon him, and that he shifted his position, as if to throw his countenance more into the shade.

This man had a cup of wine and a bunch of grapes before him, and indeed few of the company were less comfortably provided; for it was sufficiently apparent that Virro was the tavern-keeper, as well as the barber of the village. I had little doubt that the horses I had seen at the door were those of him and his companion, and that the riders were now refreshing themselves for the pursuance of their journey.

“ You have not told me, however,” said he, after a pause, “ whether or not this be the same Sabinus that was lately in Britain.”

“ Sir,” said I, hearing him repeat the inquiry, “ it is the same ; I myself came in the same ship with him from Britain, but a few days ago : He is a Centurion in the Prætorian Bands.”

“ Yes,” replied the stranger, “ I guessed in truth, it must be the same ; for I remember no other of that rank bearing the same name.”

“ If you are acquainted with him,” said I, “ you may have an opportunity of seeing him immediately, for I expect him here every moment to take me to his father’s villa along with him.”

“ Well,” quoth the barber, who by this time had ended, without further misadventure, the trimming of the Cretan—“ well, I hope he will stay for a moment when he does come, and then we shall be sure to hear the truth as to this story about the

Christian assembly. They may talk as they please, but may Jove devote me, if I had Trajan's ring upon my finger for one night, I would take good care this should be the last of them."

"And how, friend," said the stranger who had spoken before, "by what means, if I may ask of you, should you propose so speedily to do away with this fast-spreading abomination?"

"By Jove," quoth he, "I'll tell you how I should do. I would place myself thus in my tribunal"—(he took his seat at a little table, beside a goblet of wine, as he spake)—"I would seat myself thus in the midst of a field, as Cato and the great Censors of old used to do. I would cause Rome to be emptied—man, woman, and child, should pass before me; and every one that did not acknowledge the gods as he passed, by all the gods, he should be strung upon a tree, in presence of all the people. What avails watching, and prying, and spying, and surprising? I should make a shorter

work of it, I trow. By Jove, I think I should shew you what it is to deal in the old root-and-branch fashion, for once. I would let all the world see that I can let blood."

"I'll be bound you would," quoth Dromo, rubbing his chin; "and I hope the world would thank you for your pains."

"Come, come, jolly boy," quoth the tonsor, "there is a salve for every sore. Here is a cup of such wine as the Emperor himself would not disdain to moisten his lips withal. Taste—drink—forget the cut, and sit more steady the next time you hear such a story. May Hermes be my guide, good friends, if he did not shake as much under my hands as if the Christians had attempted to make a meal of himself; and, if they had done so, would they not have had a savoury banquet? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" re-echoed half the company, and Dromo was fain to accept of the cup that was offered him, instead of attempting to make any further impression on the jo-

cular barber. But before he had seen the foundation of it, Sabinus himself reappeared at the door, and summoned us to go with him. The inmates of Virro, however, prevailed on him to enter for a moment, and the Centurion having taken his seat in the midst of the company, their conversation was resumed.

“ You may say what you will of them,” quoth one of the company, who I think had not before spoken since our entrance,—“ you may say what you please about them, but I believe I have seen a little more of them than any one among you all, and I cannot bring myself to believe every thing I hear said concerning their superstition. I neither know, nor desire to know, what their faith is ; but, by Jupiter, in point of practice, I have known some of them behave so as might shame the best of ourselves ; and I shall make bold to say, that if their religion does not create goodness, it at least does not always extinguish it.”

“ Ay, master goldsmith,” quoth the barber, “ you were always fond of having an opinion of your own ; and, pray, what is it that you have had occasion to know about the Christians, more than the rest of us who hear you ? If you mean that you have seen some of them die bravely in the Amphitheatre, why, that we have all heard of at least, and I think nobody disputes it.”

“ No, master barber,” replied he, “ that is not what I was thinking of ; for, by Jove, whoever has lived in Rome as much as I have done, must be pretty well convinced that a bold death is no evidence of an innocent life. Why, I have seen your common thief-knave, when he knew he could do no better, brace you his nerves for the extremity, and die like a very Hercules. He must be a pitiful fellow, indeed, that would shame himself in the eyes of a whole city. If it were wished that wretches should expire like themselves, I take it, the best way would be to make them expire by them-

selves. No, that was not what I was thinking of. By Jove, I would rather judge of a man by his living than his dying—ay, or of a woman either.”

“ True, true ; ’tis all true you say,” rejoins Virro ; “ and pray, what have you got to tell us about the life, then, of all the Christians ?”

“ Not much,” said he ; “ not much, master barber. Only, if they were all like one that I know, I should not be ashamed to commend them—ay, if it were before the face of the Emperor himself. But you shall hear. My old mother, (peace to her manes,) was passing the Salarian one day last year, and there came by a hot-headed young spark, driving four abreast in a chariot as fiercely as if he had been a second Nero in the Circus. He called out, that I believe, but the dame was deaf, and whether he tried to pull up or no, I know not, but over she went, and one of the horses trod upon her old limbs as she fell. Another of the same sort came close behind, and I have been told they were

running a race ; but however that might be, on they both passed like a whirlwind, and my poor mother was left by herself among the flying dust. But the gods had mercy on her, they sent a kind heart to her aid ; and, by all Olympus, it beats in the breast of a Christian.”

“ So the Christian took up your old mother and was kind to her, friend Marcus ? ”

“ Kind !—why, she was carried into one of the stateliest, grandest villas on that side of Tiber, and tended for six weeks by a noble lady, as if she had been not my mother, but her own ; and this lady, friends—by Jove I suspected it not for long after—this lady was a Christian ; but I shall not say how I found it out, nor would I mention the thing at all but among honest men and good friends. She is a Christian, that is certain. I would give more gold than I ever shewed in my booth at the Saturnalia, rather than hear she was one of those whom the Prætorians seized last night. But I shall hear when I return to the city, both

where they were taken, and who they were."

"Where they were taken!" said the stranger, whose appearance I described a little while ago; "I can tell you well enough where they were taken, my good man; it was not far from the Appian Way, within one of the old monuments there,—the monument, it is said, of one of the noble branches of the Sempronii."

"Of the Sempronii?" said the goldsmith. "Phœbus, Apollo, shield us!" and I think his colour changed as suddenly as ever it did in the cheek of a damsel, and from that moment, he became as silent as hitherto he had been communicative.

The rest of the company were as quiet as he for some little space. The swarthy stranger, the silence yet continuing, arose from his seat, laid a piece of money upon the table, and moved towards the door, as if to take his departure. The barber also rose up, as if to assist him in mounting, but he said to him, "Sit still, I pray you, my

friend;" at the same time beckoning with his finger to the goldsmith, who, with a very dejected countenance, followed him into the street of the village. What passed between them there, we perceived not; but the artificer re-entered not the chamber till some moments after we had heard the departing tread of the stranger's horses. When he did come in again, he had the appearance of being in great confusion, and drank off the cup of wine which stood before Sabinus, in a way that shewed him quite unaware of what he was doing. Shortly after, he also took his departure, and we ourselves, bidding adieu to the jovial tonsor, walked slowly towards the paternal mansion of the Centurion.

CHAPTER X.

AND we very soon reached it ; for, as I have already said, it was situated but a little way out from the village. Some thick and tall hedges of beech intervened between it and the public way, which then at last took a direction different from that of the stream along whose banks we had been riding, leaving its cool waters to glide away towards the left among the green meadows and peaceful groves of the ancient Sabinus. Close to the house itself, flourished, among other trees, the sad cypress—the only one the proprietor was at last to take with him. The dwelling itself was modest and low-

roofed, having no external ornament but a single portico, with a few statues ranged between its pillars. We entered by this portico, and found the feeble old man sitting by himself (for his wife had already retired to her own chamber,) in an apartment immediately adjacent, wherein the beams of the moon, having partial access, were mingled with the almost equally soft and subdued light of a painted lamp, suspended from the ceiling. The father of my friend had all the appearance of being sinking apace beneath the progressive influence of the most hopeless of maladies—old age; yet he received me with an air, not of cheerfulness, but of kindness. The evening breeze, which found admission to his couch through the open pillars of the porch, he seemed to be inhaling eagerly, while his countenance exhibited in its wan and faint lines the pleasure with which its coolness affected him. Beside him were placed baskets of fragrant roses, gathered from the abundance of his

gardens. The young Vernæ,* who from time to time brought in these newly pulled flowers, came into the chamber with a decent appearance of sobriety and concern ; but they were never long gone, before we could hear them laughing and shouting again at their play.—“Poor children,” quoth the old man, observing that his son heard the noise with some displeasure ; “check not the poor children in their mirth, Koeso ;—why should they trouble themselves with thinking of the not remote victim of Orcus ?”

To which the Centurion replied, somewhat softening, as he spoke, that loud and cheerful tone with which he was accustomed to address all persons—“Courage, my dear father, you must not speak so of yourself. Cerberus, I perceive, has only been making an ineffectual snap at you, and you will be growing younger again after all this.”

* Children of domestic slaves.

At which the old man shook his head, without any external sign of emotion, and replied, in a low monotonous voice,—
“ Younger in the wrong way, my boy ; for I become every day smaller in body, and feebler, and less able to do any thing to help myself.—Nor am I unconscious that I have seen my due proportion of time. And yet, oh ! fast sliding gentle brook, which I see between these paternal trees—I am still loath to exchange thee for Styx, and to lose the cheerful and sacred light of the sun and moon. I wish only I were once more able to repair with thy stream to the banks of father Tiber, that I might salute the good Emperor, who has been so kind to my son, and who would treat even an old broken-down, and long-retired soldier, like myself, with more favour than is to be expected from Rhadamanthus. Trajan lives, (long may he live,) and is in vigour, and may carry whither he will his eagles, which never droop their wings ; but I—an old man and a feeble—feel full surely that it is

the lot of human nature to tend downwards at last.—As clouds let down their drops, so the many-peopled earth lets fall dismissed ghosts upon the Stygian shore.”

While he was saying this, and other things in the same strain, an ancient Egyptian slave, who seemed to have the chief management of every thing about the house, came into the chamber, and after desiring some of the boys to bring forth refreshments, took his place on a low stool by the foot of his master's couch, yet with the air of one accustomed to share both in the meals and the conversation of the family. “Come, Tarna,” said the Centurion to him as he sate down, “what has become of all your boasted philosophy? Why is it that you do not take care to inspire our old friend with notions of less gloominess? Why is it that you do not bring out for his use some of those old stores, with which, when I was young, you were more willing to treat my ears than they were to attend to them?”

“Nay, I know not how it is,” said the

old man, before the Egyptian could make any answer,—“ nay, nay, I liked very well to listen to Tarna’s fine theories when I was able to walk about the fields, and to take my evening cup beneath the shadow of the old pine upon the green ; but now I would rather have him be silent, for he fills me only with troublesome thoughts, which task my mind to wrestle with them, and which always end in discomposing my serenity. He is a philosopher,” continued he, turning to me ; “ and you must know he is one of those they call the Epicureans. But whatever others may say, I think their doctrines are all either fantastic and unprofitable, or infidel and wicked. Do not trouble me any more, dear Tarna, with any of your speeches. Keep your mind to yourself. Allow me to believe as all my fathers did, and to contemplate not only the same sepulchre in which their urns are placed, but the same dim regions in which all their shades are now expecting the greeting of another descendant.”

“Nay, sir,” then said the Egyptian, addressing himself to me, “my good master may say whatever else he pleases against my doctrines, but I am sure they appear to me to be as tranquillizing against death, as all men must admit they are in themselves grand to contemplate. To me it seems, that by the rushing shower of atoms which moves every where through space, the mind is soothed and soothed, as by the sound of a great river carrying continually the watery offspring of the mountains into the bosom of the wide ocean.”

“Nilus—Nilus, for example,” interrupted the smiling Centurion.

“Even so, if it please you,” continued the philosophic slave,—“even let it be believed that my mind cannot easily divest itself of the image of that king of rivers, with the magnificence of which my eyes in infancy and happy youth were familiar. The mind, sirs, appears to me to be soothed by the contemplation of infinity, even

as the ear of an Egyptian sleeper is calmed by the eternal music of the rolling Nilus. It mingles itself with that which it contemplates ; it perceives—it feels itself to be a liquid part of that great and endless stream of universal being—a part which has been casually arrested and detained, but which will soon mingle again and be scattered away in a thousand fragments, to wander no one knows whither through the great all-receiving void—not to lose existence, for in that my dear master entirely misunderstands me—but to cease from feeling as a Valerius, a Sabinus, or a Tarna.”

During all this the old man kept regarding his Egyptian with a placid smile, shaking his head, however, every now and then, in token of his incredulity. But I said to the philosophic slave, for it was to me in truth he appeared to be chiefly addressing himself,—

“ What is this you have said ? Do you assert that I can cease to be Valerius, to

feel as Valerius, and yet not lose my existence? Can I *be*, and yet not be *myself*?"

"Most easily," replied he, "most easily. The divided fragments may move about for a thousand years, before it befall any of them to be stopped in some future combination of atoms. These, it is manifest, only tremble and suffer when they form part of a soul, but are immediately released from all pain or mischance, when this confinement and cohesion are at an end, and they being dispersed regain liberty and wander about singly, as of yore; for, as our great dispeller of delusions says, When death is, we are not. If, therefore, Sabinus shrinks from the fear of death, it is an idle fear. Does he not perceive that when death arrives, Sabinus is no longer to be found. Whatever its effects may be, they must affect not him, but an army of innumerable disjointed essences, in no one of which could he by any means be able to recognize himself."

“To make a very short story out of a very long one,” interrupted the Centurion ; “you don’t think life is worthy of the name of existence—that being so, it is no wonder you should think lightly of death.”

“Mistake me not,” quoth the sage, “you do me great wrong if you take me for the entertainer of such loose notions as these. No, no, life *is* existence ; I not only admit that, but I assert that it is the business of every man, and the sole true object of human wisdom, to render life while it endures as pleasant as is possible. Though the atoms be fortuitously, and not permanently united, that is no reason why, while their union lasts, they should not have their corners smoothed off, and lie as comfortably together as is possible. Earthly pleasure consists in a bland juxta-position of atoms necessarily, though temporally, connected ; the removal of pain implies the presence of that calm quiescence which pervades the nobleness of the uninclosed ALL. To exist

in this shape, we are compelled ; it is our business to render our existence as near an approach to felicity as we may."

"Fill your cup, good Tarna," quoth the Centurion ; "I am no great philosopher, yet methinks I can see the drift of this part of your story. Fill up your goblet, most venerable Epicurean, and see (if it be not below your dignity,) whether the atoms, which, by a fortuitous and temporary juxtaposition have formed your throat, will not feel their corners very philosophically softened by the rushing of a little rivulet of good Falernian—one cup of which, saving your presence, I hold to be more worthy of wetting my guttural atoms, than all the water that ever sported its music between Memphis and Alexandria."

While the slave and the Centurion were thus discoursing, I wish you had been present, that you might have seen with what delight the old man listened to the words that his son uttered. Propped up among the cushions, and scarcely sufficiently mas-

ter of his trembling hand to be able to lift the cup to his mouth, he appeared to taste, as it were, the pleasure of a renovated existence, in contemplating the brown health and strong muscular fabric of the inheritor of his name. The hearty masculine laugh with which my friend usually concluded his observations, was, I take leave to think, richer music to his ears than ever Egyptian heard in the dark rollings of the Nile, or Epicurean dreamt of in the airy dance of atoms. I suspect he was more reconciled to the inevitable stroke of fate, by considering that he was to leave such a representative behind him, than by any argument which either his own superstition, or the philosophy of his attendant could suggest to him. In return for the obvious admiration of his sire, the Centurion, without question, manifested every symptom of genuine affection. Yet, I think, the instinctive consciousness of his own strength, made the piety of the robust son assume an air more approaching to that of patronage,

than might have been altogether becoming. If such a fault there were, however, it was quite plain that it escaped the notice of the old man himself, who continued, till Tarna insisted upon his retiring to bed, to gaze upon my friend, and listen to his remarks, with looks of exultation ineffable.

The Centurion retired with his father, that he might take farewell of his parents both together, in their private chamber; so that I was left alone with Tarna for some time, and it was then that, in my juvenile simplicity, I could not help expressing my surprise at finding, in a servile condition, a man possessed of such acquirements as his, and addicted to such pursuits.

“It would argue little,” he replied, “in favour either of the pursuits or the acquirements, you are pleased to talk of with so much respect, if they tended only to make me repine at the place which has been allotted me—it is no matter whether by the decrees of fate, or the caprices of fortune. And after all, I am not of opinion that any

such external circumstances can much affect the real happiness of any one. Give to him that has been born a slave, what men are pleased to call his freedom ; in a few weeks he will become so much accustomed to the boon, that he will cease to think of it—Heap wealth upon him ; to wealth also he will gradually become habituated. Rank—power—with all it is the same. It is in the mind only that the seat of happiness is placed ; and there it never can be, unless in companionship with thoughts that look down upon, and despise being affected by trifling things.”

“ And are such,” said I, “ the views of all those who follow your sect ?”

“ I wish it were so,” he replied ; “ but ere you remain long in the city, you will perceive well that it is quite the reverse. There you will meet with not a few, philosophers only in the name, who having small means of subsistence, but being desirous of leading a luxurious and agreeable life, become teachers of such doctrines as may ac-

cord best with the vicious inclinations of those who are most likely to entertain them. These persons assume and disgrace too often the name of Epicureans. They are seen everywhere at feasts crowned with myrtle, and fawning upon gouty senators ; and whenever a boar's-head appears, they are sure to call it worthy of Meleager for its size. Their conversation is made up of stale jests about Charon and his boat, and the taking of Auguries ; and, when finally inebriated, they roll upon the ground like those animals, to whom, in consequence of the proceedings of such hypocritical pretenders, the ignorant have dared too often to liken the wisest of mankind. Such things I disdain—I am satisfied to remain, as I was born, in the rank of Æsop, Terence, and Epictetus.”

By this time the Centurion had returned. He had a lamp in his hand ; and he interrupted our conversation by saying to me, “ Come, we start betimes, Valerius ;

therefore we must to bed forthwith, and you too," said he, turning his jocular eye on the slave—"You too, my sweet cock of Cyrene; you have already done enough for one night. I think you had better fold your wings, and compose yourself upon your roost.—By Jove!" he continued, as we were passing to our apartments, "what with Christians on one side, and philosophers on the other, a man cannot go to bed in these times, without having his brain perplexed as much as if he were housed in the Labyrinth."

"The Labyrinth of Crete, do you mean?" quoth Dromo, who was ready waiting for me in the room where I was to sleep.

"Peace, you well-trimmed knave," replied the Centurion, chucking him under the chin—"I suppose you think, that, because you are a Cretan, there is never a Labyrinth in the world to which you could not furnish a clew."

So saying, he stepped into a room immediately adjoining, and in a very few mi-

nutes I knew, from the heaviness of his breathing, that he was fast asleep.

“ Oh, enviable temperament !” said I to myself—“ you likened the slave to a bird. Methinks yourself are more deserving of the simile. The light and the air of heaven are sufficient to make you happy—your wings are ever strong—their flight ever easy—and the rain of affliction glides off them as fast as it falls. Sleep on, kind heart. It is only the troubles of a friend that can ever disturb your serenity.”

I had undressed, and was in bed before Dromo interrupted my reflections by saying, in a tone of considerable confidence, “ And now, Master Valerius, do you still continue, as much as two days ago, to disbelieve in philtres, and despise enchantresses ? You see what, with all my precaution, has come of this connection between Rubellia and the Neapolitan.”

“ In truth, Dromo,” I replied, “ it is visible that Pona had some share in leading the soldiers to the Christian assembly ; but

I am doubtful, if that had any thing to do with the private affairs of the Lady Rubellia. As to that matter, I confess myself entirely in the dark."

"Dark indeed," quoth he, "must your observation have been, if you have yet to learn that, but for that accursed witch, nothing of all this had befallen; but if there be an edict against the Christians, there are twenty laws against enchantresses; and that both Pona, and she that consulted her, shall know well ere long, if they do not as yet know it; or may Cretan change places with Bœotian, and be ever henceforth a bye-word for stupidity."

"Say on, good Dromo," I replied, "I am all ears; and as you appear to have been all eyes, I shall probably soon be more enlightened."

"Well," quoth he, "I am glad to find that you are in a mood to listen to me decently; for may Cretan Jove devote me, if ever I saw a pretty young gentleman, with nothing but a few insignificant mischances

behind him, and all the fair world before him, carry himself after such a melancholy hang-head guise, as you have done ever since we delivered you from your tower. Sextus said, when he sent me with the Centurion, that he was sure you would be in need of much comforting ; but, poor lad, I trow, he did not suspect he had so much reason for saying so."

" But what as to Rubellia ? Go on with your story, good Dromo."

" Well, well, you remember," said he, "where I took my station when you mounted those unfortunate steps upon the tower. I had not stood there many minutes, I think, before I heard somebody approaching on the side towards the city ; and having no doubt it was Rubellia herself, I was busy preparing myself for giving her such a salutation, as I thought would put a speedy end to her wandering for that night at all events. On came the steps, but no Rubellia. No ; you will start when you hear me say so—it was nobody but Xerophrastes himself ;

and although he had laid aside the Greek mantle, and donned a boatman's black-cloak for the nonce, I promise you I knew his stately gait well enough beneath all these new trappings. It was no part of my job, however, to attempt frightening the Stoic, though that too, I think, might not, after all, have been so very difficult ; for I swear to you he whistled as he went ; and it is a sure sign, my master, a man's pulse beats not so calmly as it ought to do, when you hear him whistling among tombs in the moonlight, more especially when he has a private errand in his breast with him."

"And so you let him pass without doing any thing?"

"I did ; I confess that I gave one or two groans, after he had gone on a few paces, but I did not observe him much quicken his walk, and I believe, to do the man justice, he set it all down to the wind rustling among the trees. But I thought not much of him at all, to speak the truth ; for, said I to myself, Well, if it be as I have sus-

pected for these two blessed days, and this master long-beard is really in league with the widow, the chances are, she herself is not far behind him. I lay by, therefore, and expected in silence till I should hear another tread; and in the meantime I spoke to you once or twice across the road, but you made me no answer, for which you know your own reasons."

"The reason," said I, "was a very simple one, I assure you. I had fallen asleep, and no wonder, for you know how long I had been a watcher."

"Well," said he, "to say truth, I guessed as much, and it was nothing but the born tenderness of my disposition, which made me cease from offering you any disturbance. I thought to myself I should surely be enough single-handed for the widow; and besides, in case of need, I knew your waking would always be in my power."

"Admirably reasoned, Dromo," said I; "and so it seems no need came, for you

certainly never awakened me ; for which I may thank the bonds from which the Centurion's kindness has just set me free. But you have atoned abundantly—I pray you, get on with your tale.”

“ Presently,” he resumed, “ I heard footsteps, indeed, my good master, and not footsteps alone, but voices, and not human voices alone neither, but the growling of those abominable dogs, with which I think both of us became better acquainted that night than we could have wished. Afraid of those foul creatures, I moved from the place as hastily as I could, till I came to a tree, the branches of which, springing low on the trunk, offered an opportunity for mounting, which I should have been a Boeotian indeed had I neglected. I mounted, and hiding myself as well as I could among the boughs, awaited the arrival of the party, which consisted—ay, stare if you will—of Xerophrates and the widow, walking in front, in earnest talk by themselves,—and the Neapolitan witch in the rear, calming, as well

as she could with her odious caresses, the hoarse throats of her brutal attendants. They halted just between the tree I had left, and that which I had ascended, and though they spoke low enough, I promise you I could hear them distinctly."

"And what, in the name of Heaven, said they?"

"'Are you sure,' said the widow, 'that this is indeed the girl whom Sextus went to see at the Villa of Capito? Are you certain of it? Will you swear it is this same Athanasia? Can there be no mistake?'

'Mistake, lady, there is none,' replied the Stoic. 'Pona was at the villa with her basket, the very day Sextus went thither, and she saw them all walking together in the garden.'

'I did so, indeed, noble lady,' interrupted the witch, who by this time had come close up to them as they were halting; 'I did indeed see them, and I swear to you, she is a beautiful creature, though not to be

talked of in the same year with my noble lady.'

'And this little Christian,' said the lady, as if to herself, 'it is she that has cost me all this trouble! It is for her that I have been insulted as never woman was by man, and they are both here in the Tower, Ponna,' said she. 'You are sure Sextus and this Athanasia are both together in the Tower?'

'They are, lady,' quoth the witch; 'they are both in the Tower, for I saw the lady go in by herself first, and then in went some dozen of those muffled blasphemers, and last of all, went in he himself. I saw him not enter indeed, but I swear to you, that I saw him here not twenty paces from hence, and he had with him that cunning slave of his, (meaning myself, sir,) whose ugly face, (the foul woman added,) I would know although it were disguised beneath all the washes that were ever mixed in the seething-pots of Calabria. I saw them here;

they threw stones at these dogs while they were crouching at my feet ; I myself was fain to escape from them, but I promise my noble lady, I have already taken measures for abundant blessed revenge ; and if she will let me say so, for my most noble lady—'

' But what,' interrupted our long-beard, ' what will Licinius say ? At least, my lady and my friend Pona will take good care that no suspicion of having had any hand in all this ever rests upon me. Sextus is a silly boy, without taste, judgment, or discretion ; but Licinius is acute and powerful, and a poor rhetorician cannot stand against Licinius.'

' Fear not,' said Rubellia ; ' fear not, dear Xerophrastes. Nobody shall appear in the matter except Pona, and as she tells you she has already given warning at the Capene Gate, the watch will be here on the instant. Be sure there are always a hundred men stationed on the Coelian. Nothing can save them, unless we interfere in

their behalf; and to that length, I think, it can scarcely be supposed we should carry our forbearance.'

"These words were scarcely out of her mouth; ere the soldiers, in good truth, were heard approaching; although they advanced, indeed, as quietly as possible, that the Christians might not have warning to disperse themselves. Xerophrastes on hearing them, ascended, with great agility, a tree just over against mine, on the other side of the road. Rubellia retreated among the pines, and Pona alone, with her dogs, awaited the arrival of the guard. I, in the mean time, would have perilled a limb, I think, to have been able to give you the alarm; but little did I suspect, that had I sought you where I left you, I should have sought for you there in vain.—How, I pray you, did you contrive to get into the accursed tower?"

I told him I should give him the story another time at full length, and mention-

ed briefly the general outline of what had occurred. And then the Cretan proceeded with his narrative.

“ I leave you to guess, Valerius, how my heart beat when I saw the witch lead the soldiers straight to the place where I supposed you were still sitting. I leave you to guess with what anxiety I saw the whole tower surrounded—surprised—entered; its secret tenants brought out,—and, above all, with what astonishment I saw you led out, the last of their number.

“ I had neither time to think by what means all this had happened, nor the least power to interfere in your behalf. I saw you all mounted—guarded—borne away. Whither they carried you, I was unable to make the smallest conjecture. I saw Sabinus speak to you, and then I had hope,—but that too failed. In brief, I saw all that passed, and did not venture down from my tree till the whole assembly, not forgetting Xerophrastes himself, had departed. Then

at last down I came, and you may judge for yourself what a story I had to tell to young Licinius when I reached home.

“To do my dear boy justice, he behaved with as much spirit as might have done credit to any one of double his years. Instead of waiting to ponder and hesitate, as he used to do when his own matters perplexed him, he went from me straight to his father. I followed him, and would have listened to what passed between them ; but the thickness of the door prevented me from very well understanding them. Your name, and the name of Athanasia, and the name of your friend the Centurion, were almost the only words I could pick up. But before they had done with their conversation, Sabinus himself arrived, and he was immediately taken into the same chamber where they were. Licinius and he went out together soon afterwards, and I think they walked towards the Palatine in the Capitol ; but whithersoever they went, they

had a good deal of work before them, for the day had advanced considerably before they returned. The Centurion's horse was brought to the door shortly after, and my master desired me to accompany him ; and they gave me these letters for you at the same time, which I had almost forgotten to deliver."

Such was the story of the faithful Cretan. The letter of Sextus, which I first opened, contained nothing but expressions of affection, concern for what had befallen me, and anxiety to see me again. That of Licinius I have still preserved, and here it is.

LICINIUS to VALERIUS *sends health.*

"Since our Sabinus desires that I should write to you, although his own kindness renders it unnecessary that I should do so, I cannot refuse. I understand little, my

Valerius, of what has brought you into this condition, from which, not without difficulty overcome, you are, notwithstanding, speedily to be delivered. I guess, that hastiness of various sorts, not, however, entirely without excuse in a person of your age, has been the means of implicating you in the affairs of a sect, equally unworthy of your communication, whether you consider the country in which their superstition originated, or the barbarities with which it is stained. But even for beauty, my young friend, it becomes not a Roman, least of all a Valerius, to forget what is due to the laws of Rome, and the will of the Prince. Consider with yourself how nearly you have escaped serious evil. Return to us, and forget what has passed, except for the lesson it must teach you. Of Rubellia and Xerophrastes I am unwilling to believe, without further examination, what has been told me by my slave Dromo. We shall speak of that and other matters, when

(which I hope will be early to-morrow)
 you once more give us the pleasure of see-
 ing you. I have then much to say. Fare-
 well.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM various interruptions, not necessary to be recited, the next day was already far advanced, before the friendly Centurion and myself once more drew near to the precincts of the city. When we reached at length the brow of the first declivity beyond the Anio, the sun was just about to sink behind the Janicular, and all the wide surface of the city lay before us bathed in the richness of his farewell beams. The innumerable sounds of the great Capitol, blended together as it were into one mighty whisper, seemed only to form part of the natural music of the air, and but for some

momentary echoes of a louder note, might almost have been confounded by the ear of a traveller with the universal hum of twilight insects, and the twitter of birds among the trees. We paused for a moment to contemplate the evening splendour of Rome ; and then rode slowly down the hill, at the base of which the path is ever darkened by the broad shadows of the cypress groves and funereal monuments of the Appian Way.

We advanced in silence through that region of melancholy magnificence, the natural effect of which was, as you will easily imagine, not a little deepened on my mind by the strong associations that connected with its scenery the causes of my own internal distresses. I scarcely knew whether I should be able of myself to recognise, among so many similar edifices, the mausoleum of the Sempronii, and there was some feeling in my breast that rendered me unwilling to put any questions concern-

ing it to Sabinus. As for Dromo, he, with the Centurion's attendant, had fallen considerably behind us ; and on the whole, indeed, I am not quite certain, whether my curiosity was not crossed and balanced by an equal measure of reluctance. As it was, I rode on in silence, and my companion (although during the day he had talked, if not laughed, as much as usual) seemed to be as quietly disposed as myself.

But while we were moving onwards thus slowly and silently, we heard of a sudden a clang of cymbals among the trees, a little to the right hand, and the Centurion, saying, " What procession can this be ?" led the way down a narrow path branching from the main road, which appeared to conduct towards the place from which the sound proceeded. This path was winding and dusky, being edged on either side with pines and cypresses, so that for some space we saw nothing; and the cymbals having ceased again, the Centurion said, " I suppose it is

some funeral ; they have probably completed every thing, and have seen out the last gleam among the embers. Let us get on, for perhaps we may be kept back by their procession, if they are already returning."

We quickened our pace accordingly, and held on till at length a sharp turning of the road discovered to us a great number of persons who were standing quite silent, as if in contemplation of some ceremony or other spectacle ; but what it was, owing to the sinking of the ground beyond, and the intervention of such a crowd of people, we could not see. Several persons on horseback seemed, like ourselves, to have had their progress interrupted ; but they were sitting quietly, and making no complaint. The silence of the whole assembly was indeed such, that Sabinus motioned to me to ask no questions, adding, in a low whisper, " Take off your riding-cap ; it is some religious rite, and you see every body is uncovered."

The Centurion himself, however, was not a person to be stopped thus, without wishing to understand something further of the cause of the interruption ; so ere long he began to manifest considerable symptoms of fretfulness. The one side of the road was guarded by a high wall, to the top of which a number of the more juvenile spectators had climbed ;—the other by a ditch of great breadth, and full of water, beyond which was a grove of trees ; and I saw him eyeing the ditch, as if considering whether by passing it, it might not be possible, without disturbing the crowd, to get nearer the object of their attention, or at least to make progress in our journey. At last he beckoned to me to follow him, and the bold equestrian at one leap passed easily over the ditch, and all the reeds that bordered it. I imitated the example, and so did the Prætorian soldier, who had now come up to us ; but as for Dromo, he was obliged to remain (patiently or impatiently) behind ;

for, of a truth, the animal he bestrode was in nowise calculated for such feats.

We rode very quickly, therefore, along the margin of the trees, and ere we had reached the bottom of the declivity on which they grew, I perceived plainly that we had come close to the Sempronian monument, and that the ceremony, whatever it might be, was taking place immediately in front of the old tower upon the road. We gave our horses to the soldier, and contrived with some difficulty to gain the bank on the side of the way immediately over against it—the same place, in fact, where the Cretan slave had taken his station among the pine-trees, on the night when all those things occurred of which I have already spoken to you. Like him, we placed ourselves as quietly as we could behind the trunks of the trees, and, indeed, for our purpose, there could have been no better situation. We were contented, however, to occupy it as much as possible without

attracting observation ; for it was evident, in spite of the curiosity that detained so great a multitude near at hand, there must be something mysterious or ominous of nature in that which was taking place, since not one of the crowd had dared to come forward, so as to be within hearing of the officiators.

And these, indeed, were a very melancholy-looking group. For men, and women, and children of every age, to the number it may be of an hundred, appeared all standing together sorrowfully, and in garments of black ; while, in the midst of them, and immediately by the base of the monument, two or three veiled priests, with their necessary assistants, seemed to be preparing for sacrifice a strong black bull, whose hoofs spurned the dust as they held him, and his gilded horns glittered in the light of the declining sun. Sabinus no sooner discovered the arrangement of the solemn company, than he suspected what was their occupa-

tion, and he whispered to me, while as yet all was silent, "Be sure, these are all the kindred of the Sempronii. Without question they have come to purify the mausoleum, and to avert, according to the custom of antiquity, the vengeance of the violated manes. Behold," said he, "that tall and stately figure, close to the head of the animal on the right hand; that, I know, is Marcia—yes, Marcia Sempronia—she that is priestess of Apollo the Palatine. Without doubt, these by her are her brothers."

"Some of her near relations they must be," I made answer also in a whisper; "for observe you that young woman, whose face is wrapped in her mourning veil, and whose sobs are audible even through all its folds? I had one glimpse of her countenance this moment, and I am sure it is the young Sempronia, the cousin and companion of the unfortunate Athanasia,—the daughter of Lucius the senator."

"Poor girl," replied Sabinus, "from my heart do I pity her. See how she is in

agony from thinking of that which hath befallen her friend. They are all joining hands, that the nearest of the kindred touching the priest, his deed may appear manifestly to be the deed of all. The Priestess of Apollo takes hold of the left hand of him that wields the axe, and they are all hand in hand. She, poor soul, alas ! she is ill able to take any part in their service ; and they all appear sufficiently down-cast."

At this moment, one of the officiators sounded a few mournful notes upon a trumpet, and its solitary echo thrilled the air. The priest who held the axe, clave at one blow the forehead of the blind-fold bull. The blood streamed, and wine streamed with it abundantly upon the base of the mausoleum ; and then, while we were yet gazing on the convulsions of the dying animal, the trumpet sounded a second time, and the whole company sung together, the sacrificing priest leading and directing

them. Distinct above all, yet low and stedfast rather than loud, I heard the voice of the stately Priestess of Apollo ; but as for poor Sempronia, her notes were broken, and her assistance feeble.

The shadows of the tower and of the pine trees lay strongly upon them, and I thought there was something of a very strange contrast between the company and their chaunt, on the one hand, and the beautiful sculptures, full of all the emblems of life and happiness, on the other, with which, according to the gay dreams of Grecian fancy, the walls of the funereal edifice itself had here and there been garnished. Fauns, and torch-bearing nymphs and children, crowned with garlands, and wreathed groupes and fantastic dances, seemed to enliven almost to mockery the monumental marbles ; but one felt the real gloominess both of death and of superstition, in the attitudes and accents of the living worshippers. It was thus they sung :—

Ye Gods infernal ! hear us from the gloom
 Of venerable depths remote, unseen ;
 Hear us, ye guardians of the stained tomb,
 Majestic Pluto—and thou, Stygian Queen,
 On the dark bosom leaning of great Dis—
 Thou reconciled Star of the Abyss.

Blood, not for you, unholy hands have pour'd,
 Ye heard the shriek of your insulted shrine ;
 Barbarian blasphemies, and rites abhorr'd,
 Pollute the place that hath been long divine ;
 Borne from its wounded breast an atheist cry
 Hath pierced the upper and the nether sky.

With blood of righteous sacrifice again
 The monumental stone your suppliants lave ;
 Behold the dark-brow'd bull—Behold him slain !
 Accept, ye powers of the relenting grave,
 The sable current of that vital stream ;—
 And let the father's hope upon the children gleam.

And ye, that in the ever dusky glades
 Of Hades wandering (by Cocytus' shore,)
 Ancestral spirits—melancholy shades—
 With us the trespass of the tomb deplore ;—
 Oh ! intercede—that terror and disgrace
 May not possess (as now) your resting-place.

What, though the liquid serpent of the deep
 Between lie coil'd in many a glittering ring,
 Not unobserved of your pale eyes we weep,
 Nor to deaf ears this doleful chaunt we sing ;

Strong is the voice of blood through night to go,—
Through night and hell, and all the realms below.

Then hear us, kindred spirits—stately Sire
And pensive Mother ! wheresoe'er ye glide ;
If ever solemn pile and soaring fire
In freedom sped you to the Stygian tide,—
Have pity on your children : let the breath
Of living sorrow melt the frozen ear of death.

For HER, that sprung like us from your high line,
Hath mingled in the sacrifice of guilt,—
Ye know that angry star, her natal sign,
To expiate whose curse this blood is spilt ;—
If not suffices this atoning blood,
Oh, steep the thought of her in Lethe's flood.

Beneath that current, lazy and serene,
In whose unfathomable waters lie
The slumbering forms of horrors that have been
In Hades, and in Ocean, Earth, and Sky—
With long forgotten curse and murder old,
Steep that lost daughter's errors manifold.

Once more for you an hallow'd flame there burns,
Once more for you an hallow'd stream there flows ;
Despise not our lustrations of your urns,
Nor let unhoused Manes be our foes !
Above the children of your lineage born,
Hover not, awful ghosts, in anger and in scorn.

These words were sung, as I have said,
by the whole of this kindred there assem-

bled together; the first part of them distinctly, though not loudly, but the last verses in a note so very low, that no one, unless quite near (like ourselves) could possibly have comprehended any thing of their meaning. But as for the young Sempronia, when they came to that part of the chaunt, in which reference was so particularly made to Athanasia, not only did her lips refuse to join in the words, but her agitation was such, that I thought the poor maiden would have screamed outright, had she not been controuled by the eye, and the hand also, of her aunt, the Priestess. Sobs, however, and low hysterical groans, could not be stifled; and at last so great was her agony, that even the haughty priestess was compelled to give way to it.

“Bring water,” said she; “dash ye water upon the foolish thing; methinks it seems almost as if she had partaken in the frenzy of her unhappy——”

And before she could finish the sentence, one or two of the females that were present

did take hold of Sempronia, and began, seeing there was no water nearer at hand, to bear her slender form towards the small stream, of which I have already spoken, and which flowed immediately behind the clump of pine trees, amongst which the Centurion and I were standing.

She was quite passive in their hands; and they dragged her without resistance or difficulty to the place where we were standing; but they could not pass without seeing us: and no sooner did the eyes of Sempronia fall upon me, than she burst by one unexpected effort from the arms of those that were sustaining her, and ere I or any one could suspect what she was to do, there lay she at my feet, clinging with her arms around my knees, and looking up to me (astonished,) with a face of such anguish as never before, nor I think since, did I see portrayed in any human lineaments. The tresses of her hair, which, in her struggle, had altogether unbound themselves, hung around her neck, and lay upon her shoul-

ders in dark masses, that, heaving with the heaving of her bosom, seemed of themselves to be instinct with the elements of life and agony. Her beautiful features were at one moment pale as ivory, and the next saw them darkened almost with the scarlet of disimprisoned blood,—and, “Oh! Valerius,” said she in a voice as full of tremour as her complexion was of change,—“Oh! dear Valerius, they curse Athanasia! Where is my Athanasia? where have they taken her? imprisoned—devoted—where does she lie? Oh! tell me, that I may go to her—that I may go instantly to her—that I may go to comfort Athanasia!”

“Peace!” said, before I could answer, the Priestess of Apollo,—“Peace, mad, wretched thing,—has infatuation blasted the whole of our line?” And so saying, she seized Sempronia by the arm, and compelled her to spring from her knees. But the maiden still clung by her hands to me, and continued, with looks and words of misery, to demand from me that knowledge which,

alas ! I would myself have given so much to possess. Sabinus, however, smote me on the shoulder, as if to make me recollect myself; and I had resolution enough not to betray the feelings with which I listened to Sempronia's frantic supplication.

“What is this, sir?” then said the Priestess to me,—“What is it that you know of Athanasia? and why is it that you have presumed to witness the secret sacrifice of a noble race?—Speak,—or is there no meaning at all in this poor girl's phrenzy? And yet, methinks I have seen you before, and that, too, if I mistake me not, was in the presence of——”

“It was,” said I, hastily,—“It was indeed in the presence of Athanasia; but that circumstance, if you please to remember, was altogether accidental. I was with the Lady Rubellia when you found her in the Temple of Apollo——”

“Yes,” said she, “it was that same day when she refused to name the name of Phœbus in his own precincts ! Ha ! little did I

imagine what thoughts were in her breast, else might we at least have been spared this open degradation. And yet you, methinks, saluted Athanasia—What is your name, sir?—Know you, in truth, whither the Lady Athanasia has been conveyed?”

“He was with her!—he was with her!” exclaimed Sempronia,—“he was with her in the tower when the soldiers came.—Oh, Valerius! if ever you loved Athanasia, tell me where she is now,—into what dungeon have they cast my friend—my sister?—”

“Ha!” quoth the Priestess, “he was with her in the tower!—Romans—kinsmen—Lucius—Marcus—hear ye this? I charge ye, seize upon this treacherous blasphemer!—It is he that has deceived Athanasia; and now must he come here to taint the smoke of our sacrifice, and pollute our prayers with his presence.—Seize him!—Seize him!”—And she herself grasped my cloak as she spake—“Seize, I charge ye, this accursed Christian.”

But Sabinus, when he saw the Priestess

thus furious, stept forward, and said to her kinsmen, who were standing in perplexity behind her, “Sirs, I beseech you be not ye also carried away with this madness.—My friend here knows nothing of the Lady Athanasia, except that she was borne away by soldiers from the very place where we are standing. I myself witnessed it also, being here with the Prætorians. Valerius is no more a Christian than the lady that accuses him.”

“I know not, sirs, how we are to understand all this,” said one of the Sempronii, in a calm voice. “Is this young man the same Valerius who is living in the house of Julius Licinius?—Yet it must be he. I have been with Licinius this very day; and if this be he, whatever he may have known before, I am sure he knows nothing of where Athanasia is now,—and, sister, I am well assured he is no Christian.”

“It is the same, sir,” said Sabinus. “He is the same person of whom you spake, and

I am Sabinus, a Centurion of the Prætorians."

"We have all heard of your name," said Sempronius respectfully; "I perceive there is some mistake in all this matter. If it please you, let us walk aside, and understand each other."

So saying, he withdrew Sabinus to a little distance, and beckoned to me to accompany him, and I did so, the Priestess having in her confusion lost her hold of my cloak; while young Sempronia, who had fallen on the ground, occupied the attention of the Centurion, and the rest of those who were near her.

"Valerius," said the old man, when he perceived that we were out of hearing; "I crave you, in the first place, to forget all this trouble which has been occasioned to you by the violence of my daughter, on the one hand, and of my sister on the other. They are women; and, for different reasons, the violence of both is excusable. I have been for a considerable part of this day with

Licinius, and have heard from him enough to satisfy me how guiltlessly you yourself have been involved in this affair ; and your speedy liberation from confinement is more than enough to confirm my belief of all that he said. Yet there is much which I do not understand—I pray you speak openly, and fear nothing—you have indeed nothing to fear. Was it in consequence of any private meeting with my niece—nay, I mean not to suspect you of any thing amiss—in one word, how was it that you happened to be taken into custody with that unhappy girl ?”

“ Sir,” I replied, “ you are a noble Roman, and the near kinsman of Athanasia. You have a right to put these questions, and whatever reluctance I may have to overcome, I feel that I have no right to refuse an answer. I might easily say, and truly, that it was not in consequence of any connection between myself and Athanasia, that I came into the situation of which you know the consequences already. And yet

in saying so, I should not tell you the whole truth, which I do desire to tell you. Know, then, that I came to this place on that unfortunate night, not only without any expectation of seeing Athanasia, but for a purpose entirely unconnected with her." And so I told Sempronius, plainly and distinctly, the story both of my unwilling entrance into the mausoleum, and of my forcible abduction from it. In short, I saw no reason to conceal any thing from the person who was most likely to be able to serve Athanasia, if any thing to serve her were possible. Finally, seeing how kindly he received this communication, I told him I had gathered from the lips of Sempronia, the moment before, that she considered me as the lover of Athanasia.

"What I have felt," said I, "what I still feel, and I perhaps shall ever feel, in regard to her, is nothing. I have never spoken of love to Athanasia, and I have no reason to suspect her of having ever thought of me

otherwise than as a common acquaintance, perhaps a friend."

"It is well," he said; "you speak honestly, and as becomes a man of the Valerian blood. Be assured, that your candour shall do you no injury in my estimation. But as for poor Athanasia, I swear to you I cannot yet bring myself to believe that she hath in reality been privy to such things as have been discovered concerning these Christians."

"Discovered!" said I. "I pray you, what has been discovered concerning them? If you allude to any of the wild stories that are circulated about their religion, you may depend upon it, 'tis all mere madness to believe a word of it. I have read in their sacred books myself, and I swear to you, that, so far as I have seen, nothing can be more simple, benign, humane, than the morality inculcated by their leader."

"Poh! Poh!" he answered; "I was not thinking of their creed, which, for aught I

know or care, may be sublime enough ; for there was always a mysterious sort of philosophy current among those old Asiatic people. But I speak of the designs of these men ; in one word, I speak of their conspiracy."

"Conspiracy !" said I.—"What? How? Against whom? I will pledge my life, no conspiracy was sheltered beneath yon tower that night. I swear to you, they are simple people, and were thinking of nothing but their worship."

"Worship !" quoth he, with a smile ; "I promise you it will not be so easy to persuade me that Cotilius has suddenly become a man of so much piety, either to our gods, or to the deities, (if they have any) of the Christians.—What, Cotilius? By Jove, Rome does not hold at this moment a more bold, daring, godless rascal. You may as soon try to make me believe that Capaneus himself came to Thebes with a hymn in his mouth. No, no—the sworn friend

of Domitian will not easily gain credit for his new-sprung sanctity."

"Cotilius?" I answered. "That was the very name of the man that seized me, as I have told you."

"I should have guessed as much," quoth he. "Yes, I promise you, how little soever poor Athanasia might have known, secrets you may depend upon it they had; and Cotilius was well aware at what peril they should be revealed."

"The late example of Thraso," said I, "must indeed have alarmed him."

"What," said he; "do you speak of the old fanatic Syrian that died t'other day, rather than join in the sacrifice of Jupiter? My good friend, you know little of Cotilius, if you think it was of danger by such means avertible that he stood in terror. No, no—had the worst of his fears been the necessity to worship all the deities between Ganges and Rhine, I assure you he would have slept more soundly on his pillow than I think he has done ever since the death of

Domitian—the most grateful sacrifice, by the way, that I believe either Olympus or Tartarus has received for these many days.”

“But surely,” said I, “you do not believe, Sempronius, that Athanasia had any knowledge of the man’s secret designs, if he had any. He may have used Christianity, or desired to use it, as a weapon against the state ; but be certain, neither she nor Thraso, nor any of those really attached to their religion, had any notion of his purpose.”

“It may be so, indeed,” he answered.—“Heaven grant it may be so. I can indeed scarce imagine it to be otherwise. Christianity itself is a crime—a grievous crime ; but were it possible to shew that the poor girl had no other offence but her share in this fanaticism, means, methinks, might be contrived among us to move the clemency of Trajan. As for Cotilius, I will speak to you more at length of him anon. I will bid adieu to my sister, and take order about my daughter ; and then, if it so please you, we shall walk together to the city.”

To this I agreed, but Sabinus being apprehensive of appearing to come late home, rode on to the camp of the Prætorians. He whispered to me, however, that unless he were most necessarily detained, he should be, ere long, at the house of Licinius, in case he might be able to offer me any further assistance.

CHAPTER XII.

“To you,” said the Senator, as we went on, “who have so lately come from your island, the whole of this expiatory spectacle is probably quite new ; but I am sure Sabinus could not have been aware what was its purpose, otherwise he would not have been guilty of so grievously offending the feelings of my sister, and some of the rest of my kindred, by remaining a witness of these most private rites. The Priestess is indeed inconsolable, and her grief has set half her other passions in motion likewise. Athanasia was as dear to her as if she had been her daughter ; so, in truth, she was to us all, ever since her own parents died. Well, if kind heart and noble understand-

ing had been to stand vouchers for happiness, I should have said, (father though I be myself,) that Rome did not contain such a creature as my brother's orphan. But Cotilius, this knave Cotilius, has I fear blasted her hopes and ours."

"It occurs to me," said I, "and I should have mentioned it to you before, that there seemed to be no great understanding between this Cotilius and Athanasia. She was evidently displeased with many things he both said and did; and he, on his part, did not appear much to relish her interference."

"True," he continued, "you have already hinted as much; and I assure you, these are some of the circumstances in the whole case that tend most to excite my hopes concerning its termination. Great Heavens! what would Caius have said had he dreamt that his orphan girl was to be suspected of having sympathy with any of the dark designs of that shame to Roman knighthood?"

But you, of course, are a stranger to every thing of this man's history."

"With its end, at least," I replied, "it is like we may all be soon enough acquainted."

"Yes," quoth he, "Heaven grant we have not cause too deeply to remember it! but as for me, I have known him from the beginning, and I swear to you, that from the first day I saw him, I considered his face as something ominous to look upon. Jove avert that I should prove in this to have been a keen-eyed augur. I have told you already that he was in great favour with Domitian."

"And the reverse, of course," said I, "both with Nerva and Trajan."

"Even so," he continued, "and with all reason; for you must know, that in all the disturbances which occurred on the accession of the last sovereign, and, in particular, in those most foul intrigues among the Prætorians, which at one time brought Nerva's own life into immediate danger, and compelled him to bare his neck to the

swords of the soldiery at his palace gate, this Cotilius was more than suspected to have had a deep and most traitorous concern. When Petronius and Parthenius* were hacked in pieces, it needed no great witchcraft to detect some of the moving spirits that produced their catastrophe; but proof there was none at the time, and even had there been proof enough, the good old man would have been too timid to act upon it. These things, however, could not be forgotten either by Nerva or his successor. Hitherto the strong hand of the present Emperor has repressed every rebellious motion; but be sure that no man ever lived more an object of suspicion, than this

* These were the principal conspirators by whom Domitian was slain. They were afterwards butchered by the Prætorians, who regretted the tyrant; and it was supposed to be chiefly in consequence of that slaughter, and its shameful consequences to himself, (for he was compelled, among other insults, to return public thanks to the butchers,) that Nerva called to his aid the personal vigour and high military genius of Trajan.

man has done ever since Nerva adopted Trajan."

"And you think," said I, "that, among other intrigues, it had occurred to this man to make his own use of the Christians; despised and persecuted though they be, there can, indeed, be no doubt that their numbers are considerable, and that their faith is a strong bond of cohesion."

"Yes, yes, Valerius," replied the Senator, "now, at last, I think you begin to see something of the matter. Their numbers, Heaven knows how or why, multiply daily, in spite of all the evils to which the least suspicion may subject them. Their faith, be it what it may, must, indeed, be admitted to contain abundant elements of power; and to tell you the truth, my only wonder is, that long ere now some bold designer has not taken, or attempted to take advantage of the means presented by its formidable, though untried energies. But still we must not forget, that so far as the rest

are concerned, all this is mere conjecture. As yet the treason even of Cotilius rests on suspicion only, and report,—with perhaps some aid from the scarcely less credible confession of a few hirelings; and, after all, even if he were proved guilty of having nourished such schemes, the account you give of what you both saw and heard at their assembly, inspires me with very considerable doubts whether he can be supposed to have ever as yet ventured to invite their participation;—unless, indeed, we are to imagine that they practised deception while you were with them.”

“As yet, then,” said I, “neither Cotilius nor any of the others have confessed anything?”

“Nay,” replied he; “all I can answer for is, that a few hours ago nothing had been confessed. What has passed in the interim, it is impossible for me to conjecture. The moment I heard of what had happened—and I even to hear of it might

have been denied for a long time, but for a female slave of Capito's, who had been in the custom of attending upon Athanasia—I went to the Palatine, in hopes of attaining either assistance from Urbicus, or mercy, if that were all we could look for, from Trajan. But Urbicus told me very distinctly, that as yet he could give me no satisfaction, except that of knowing that my niece was in a solitary and perfectly safe place of confinement. The charges, he said, against one of the leaders (he meant Cotilius) were great and heavy, and until these were sifted to the bottom, it was impossible that any access could be afforded to the person of any one of those who had been thrown into confinement. The Emperor, he added, had himself shewn symptoms of anxiety, much beyond what are usual with him on any similar occasion; and had even, so he hinted, been in person investigating the matter at a distance from the city, during great part of the preceding night and day.

“ To tell you the truth, Valerius, till this thing fell out, I was wont to consider the new violence about the Christians as somewhat unworthy of the enlarged and liberal intellect of Trajan ; but it had not occurred to me, how easily the resources of such a superstition might be enlisted in the cause of discontent, if not of treason.”

“ And what,” said I, “ may now be, according to your views, the most probable course of procedure concerning the prisoners ?”

“ I know not,” he replied ; “ nor, by Hercules ! do I believe there is a man in Rome beyond the palace-gate, that would venture more than myself to form guesses upon such a subject. No, sir, I promise you secrecy is now the order of the day ; and this Urbicus, and all the rest of them that are immediately about the Prince, have learned to wear faces of such more than human wisdom, that I confess I am sick when I look upon them. At times almost could I sympathise with the unreflecting vulgar, who

regret (even now) the careless swagger of the discarded freed-men—but no, that thought is unworthy of a man and a Roman. Far be it from me to arraign the well-trying prudence of the generous Trajan. I trust in Jove, our poor girl may be guiltless of this, (if guilt, such as I have talked of, there be,) and then I have no doubt her burden may be lightened. As for the weakness of mere superstition, I believe the Prince is as free from it as any man of education in Rome. He has, indeed, been greatly alarmed about these Christians; but he is not acquainted with the East so well as his father was. He is at home in Gaul and Germany; but I think it likely enough he may have been somewhat deceived about any thing of Syrian origin, such as this superstition.”

“Of course,” said I, “nothing will be done in regard to Athanasia until all circumstances have been examined.”

“Done!” said he; “so help me Phœbus Apollo, has not enough been done already to justify almost in a man more than you

have seen among our women? Has not a whole family been disgraced? Has not the mausoleum of their fathers been prostituted for the mad, if not blasphemous, purposes of this barbarian sect? and has not all this been done through the silliness of a single girl? By Jove! here is matter enough to alarm the least superstitious of us all. If the Senate should be summoned, with what countenance should I shew myself among my friends?—Mad, foolish girl! How little did she know in what trouble she was to involve those that love her the best.”

“Alas! Sempronius,” said I, “think what a weight of suffering must have fallen upon herself alone—helpless—hopeless. I wish to Heaven it were possible to learn where she is.”

“Impossible,” said he; “but why should I be thus tormenting you with my own griefs? I perceive, Valerius, that you indeed are more to be pitied than any of us. Well, come what may, I shall never be able

to think unkindly of poor Athanasia.—No, no ; when women err, men are ever to blame ; depend upon it, we shall find some cunning Cotilius or other has been at the bottom of the whole.”

By this time we had come within sight of the house of Licinius, and the Senator prepared to accompany me thither ; “ for,” said he, “ his head is cool, and that is more, I think, than any one would say, either for you or for myself.”

On entering the house, we were informed that Licinius himself had supped abroad, and was not yet returned ; and the freedman who told us so, added, that his master appeared to be much engaged, and had gone out in company with some friends, who, he thought, were likely to detain him till a late hour. “ In that case,” the Senator whispered to me, “ I have no doubt he is occupied with the same affair as ourselves. I doubt not he will let me know if he has any thing to communicate. In the mean time, I must go to my brother’s house, and

in the morning we shall all of us probably be better able to speak further together with advantage." So saying, Sempronius departed, and I was left at liberty to inquire concerning Sextus.

I found my friend alone in his chamber, where he embraced me with all the ardour of juvenile affection. "Alas!" said he, "my dear Valerius, at any other time I might have found fault with you for taking so great a part in my griefs, and yet keeping so many of your own to yourself. But if it be indeed as Sempronia has said, I should be a strange friend to choose this hour for complaining of such trifles as regard only myself; my only concern is for you, and for Athanasia. Speak, has no intelligence been yet obtained of her place of confinement, and is there no prospect of her also being restored to her liberty? My heart bleeds for you, Valerius, for I see from your countenance that the truth has been told us."

"Sextus," I replied, "it was only be-

cause of the greatness of your own distresses that I concealed from your kindness any of mine. But when did you see Sempronia, and what did she tell you ?”

“ My Valerius,” he answered, “ I shall tell you every thing to-morrow ; at present, I have only time to say, that the misfortune of Athanasia was communicated to Sempronia almost immediately, by an old freedwoman, who had been in the habit of attending her when she went from home in secret, and who, going to the mausoleum to accompany her on her return, arrived there just in time to see what befel her. She saw you also, (how she knew who you were, I know not,) and when she had told her story to Sempronia, the poor girl, before speaking even with her father, sent for me to come to her in the gardens. I did so ; all that passed I need not repeat ; but I hope my advice was the right one. At all events, I acted for the best, and my father, who is now aware of every thing, seemed to approve of what I had done. Oh ! Valerius,

were Athanasia free, and you happy, many things have occurred to make me much more at ease than when you left us. My father is evidently much shocked with what Dromo told about Rubellia ; and as for Xerophrastes, he had not once spoken to him either yesterday or to-day. Indeed, neither of them have been much here. My father is continually exerting himself concerning Athanasia ; and Xerophrastes, I suppose, being conscious of the baseness of what he has done, is afraid of a discovery."

"Without doubt," I replied, "the solemn hypocrite has many fears. Even from what Dromo overheard of his conversation with Rubellia, one might gather as much."

"True," he replied ; "and his fears are all for himself. But, in the meantime, I take no notice of any thing when I see him. It is of my father he is afraid, and when all things are discovered clearly, I promise you, I believe we may leave him very safely in his hands."

“ In the mean time,” said I, “ your father is from home, and not expected to return very soon. I pray you, where is he ?”

“ That I know not,” quoth he ; “ but I doubt not he is at the palace, or with some of the magistrates, assisting in the investigation of this conspiracy. As for me, I am sorry I must leave you, for I promised to meet Sempronia ; and although I have nothing to tell her, I cannot fail in my appointment. She must have returned before this time from the mausoleum, where an expiatory sacrifice was to be made at sunset.”

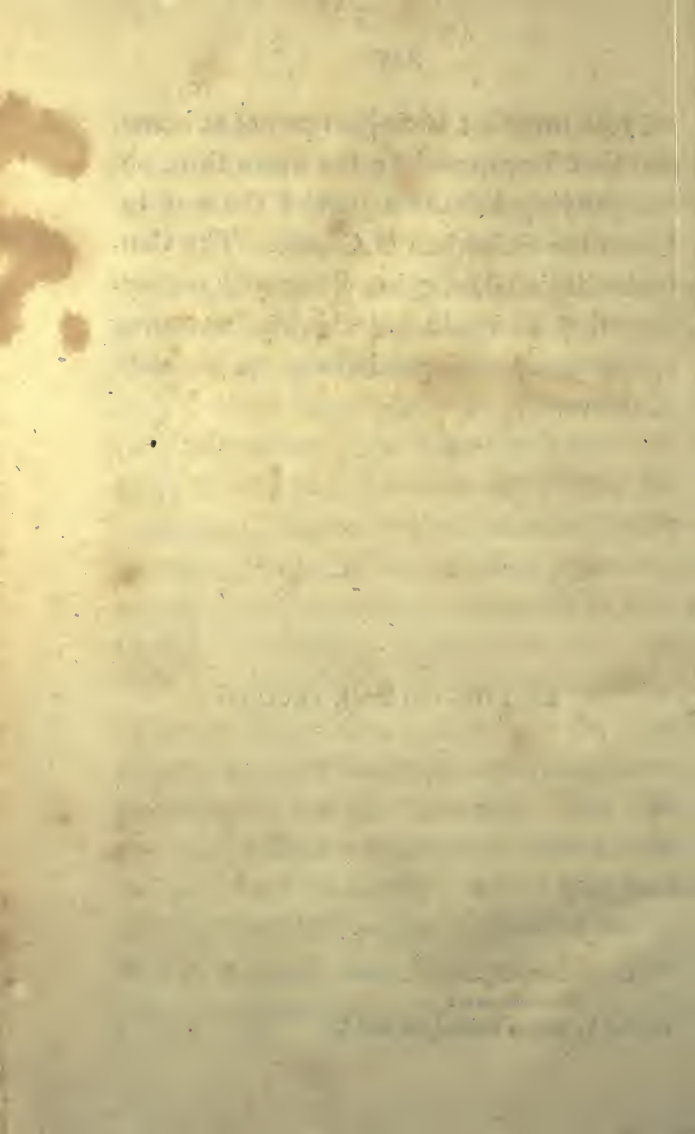
Sabinus, by this time, having executed whatever things were necessary at the Prætorian camp, had hastened to me once more, according to his kind promise. His look was more full of concern than when he had left me ; and no wonder, for he had been hearing from his brother soldiers of the affair of Cotilius, and that probably with many exaggerations.

I told him that Licinius was not at home, and that I proposed, in the mean time, accompanying Sextus a part of the way towards the Suburban of Capito. The Centurion insisted on going along with us, saying, that he could not think of returning to the camp without having spoken with Licinius.

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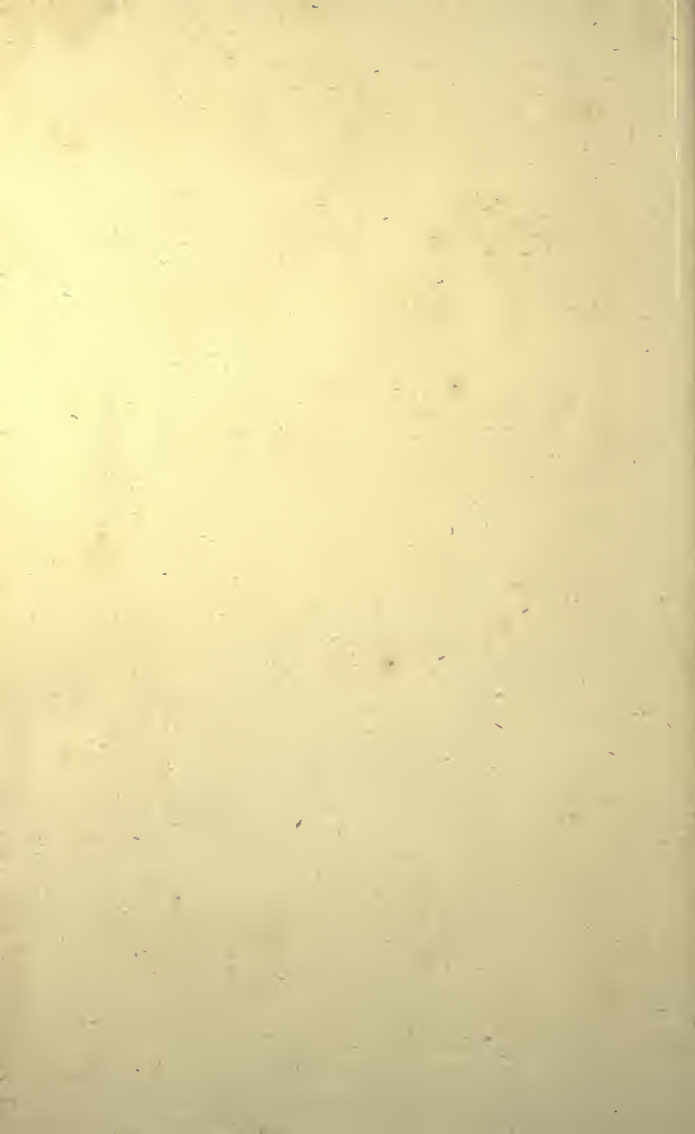
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